

Yuliya Trubachyova

Seen from the Outside:
Perceptions of the EU in Kazakhstan

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TRUBACHYOVA YULIYA: Seen from the Outside: Perceptions of the EU in Kazakhstan

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This study covers EU perceptions by different groups of Kazakhstani elites. The significance of the research is supported by the growing cooperation of Kazakhstan and the EU (for example, the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, 2015). Furthermore, the Kazakhstani perceptions of the EU are recognized understudied. Simultaneously, some controversy can be observed between the alleged and the real perception of the EU abroad.

Methodologically, in order to study elite perceptions, the thesis consists of two levels of analysis. First, the study relies on qualitative content analysis (QCA) of the mass media articles, namely, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* and Tengrinews portal, with 86 articles in total published during the 2015-2017 period. Second, with the help of QCA it reflects on the author-conducted interviews with media and business elites, civil society and experts/ academics in October-December 2017.

According to my analysis, the EU-Kazakhstan relations are perceived positively by both different parts of the Kazakhstani elite and different sources of data, namely, the mass media and the author-conducted interviews. The perception of the EU as a normative power is quite ambiguous while the image of the EU as an economic power is prominent. This topic should be included into the further studies to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation between Kazakhstan and the EU. The results may help IR scholars, policymakers as well as general public to broaden the horizon of the understanding of the EU international identity.

Keywords: European Union, Kazakhstan, external perceptions, normative power, content analysis

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List of Abbreviations

ACP – African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

AU – African Union

BOMCA – Border Management in Central Asia

CA – Central Asia

CADAP – Central Asia Drug Action Program

CITES – Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species

CMT – Conceptual Metaphor Theory

EAEU – Eurasian Economic Union

EaP – Eastern Partnership

ECB – European Central Bank

EIDHR – European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights

EPA – Economic Partnership Agreement

EPCA – Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

EU – European Union

FPI – Foreign Policy Instruments

GNP – Gross National Product

IR – International Relations

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCRE – National Center for Research on Europe
NGO – Non-governmental Organization
NP – Normative Power
NPE – Normative Power Europe
NZ – New Zealand
OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PPMI – Public Policy and Management Institute
SIT – Social Identity Theory
SP – Strategic Partner
TEC – Treaty Establishing the European Community
TEU – Treaty on European Union
UK – United Kingdom
UN – United Nations
UNFF – United Nations Forum on Forests
US/ USA – United States/ United States of America
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB – World Bank
WTO – World Trade Organization
QCA – Qualitative Content Analysis

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Why to study EU perceptions in Kazakhstan? The choice of this topic and the external perceptions framework can be explained by conceptual and practical reasons. First of all, there are only a few resources available in terms of reliable and empirical evidence on how Kazakhstan views the EU, namely, *how media, the public and elites see the EU*. Therefore, the lack of prior knowledge from the other side of the ‘coin’ (the EU) or not considering the changing perceptions in Kazakhstan may result in problems with the implementation of EU-Central Asia (CA) cooperation such as a failure of the EU Strategy for Central Asia 2007 or in EU-Kazakhstan relations.

Second, the EU is the most significant trade and economic partner of Kazakhstan, a major investor and donor. A fortiori, the EU is seen as a political partner to a greater extent if looking back to the 2000-s. It may be argued that Kazakhstan is a hostage of its geopolitical position between the two major players, Russia and China. However, currently Kazakhstan seeks more and more to diversify its foreign policy and to enlist the support of other global players where the EU is given the priority.

Third, Kazakhstani perceptions will contribute to the interpretation of the EU’s global importance in the world. Since there is an ongoing debate on what kind of international actor the EU is (‘normative’, ‘civilian’, ‘soft’, ‘transformative’ power, etc.), citing Strath (2002) fits and presents the argument for support of the external perceptions approach more than ever: ‘Europe does not exist without non-Europe’ and ‘Europe can only be realized in the Mirrors of Others’ (Chaban et al. 2009, 2).

1.2. Conceptual Framework & Literature Review

In my thesis, I apply EU external perceptions literature as a conceptual approach, as well as refer to the Normative Power Europe (NPE) discussions. Perceptions is a multifaceted concept combining features of EU studies, IR, political psychology, political science, communication studies and sometimes even linguistics (Chaban and Holland 2014; 2015). Thereby, the EU external perceptions have been investigated with the emphasis on the concept of image, role

theory and international identity as well as the EU's foreign policy capabilities and goals. In my study I assume that perception is the 'result of the subjective or psychological cognition of the observer rather than the objective reflection of the object that is being observed' (Shiming 2010, 269 cited in Chaban and Holland 2014, 9). Moreover, I consider that images are an inevitable part of the perceptions (e.g. Beller 2007 in Chaban & Holland 2014). I also support Hermann's definition of perceptions focused on the interplay of mutually formed images and expectations created by an abyss between 'Self' and 'Other'. I apply perceptions conceptual framework because I believe that the political realm is socially-constructed. That is why, awareness of the actors' attitudes towards each other and 'interaction between actors can lead to the mutual reformulation of identity and herewith to reformulation of perceptions' (Peeren and Horstkotte 2007 cited in Barcevičius et al. 2015, 14) that shows the ability of actors to change themselves through perceptions.

In my research, I consider that both mass media materials and author-conducted interview materials represent the views of Kazakhstani elite. I have chosen to analyze the materials presenting elite perceptions because they are alleged to be 'more participant, more informed, [and] more mobile' than the general public (McClosky 1965 cited in Chaban and Holland, 2008, 13). Studying the materials covering elite images of the EU is meaningful, because according to Brecher, elite perceptions and attitudes significantly contribute to a country's foreign policy direction (Chaban and Holland 2008, 13).

During the past two decades, EU external perceptions have been studied by three major independent, but often complementary projects, namely NCRE series of projects, GARNET and 'New Roles of the EU in International Politics' (see Holland et al., 2007; Chaban and Holland, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2015; Chaban et al., 2009; Holland and Chaban 2010, 2014; Chaban and Kelly, 2017; Lucarelli 2007; Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2009, 2010; see, Elgström 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010; Kilian and Elgström 2010; see more in Lucarelli 2014a). All these projects are sometimes inter-connected and present information on the EU's power and leadership to some extent. Only recently, external perceptions studies of the EU as a normative power have started to emerge.

I will mostly follow Chaban and Holland's framework where most attention is given to 'Othering' and perceptions as a tool because this direction activates the notion of 'the responsive Other' (Pickering 2001 cited in Chaban and Holland 2014, 11). At the same time,

this conceptual model offers a viable solution for the EU perceptions research due to possibility of ‘avoiding traps of Eurocentrism’ (Chaban and Holland 2014, 11). In addition, I support Lucarelli’s thesis on the EU being a ‘distinctive’ actor in international relations and adhere to the concept of NPE in Manners’ (2002) initial understanding. Manners emphasizes crucial characteristic of the normative power, which is ‘ability to shape conceptions of ‘normal’’ (Manners 2002, 239). To maintain its position in IR scholarship, the EU external perceptions as predominantly empirically-grounded research should be more systematic (Chaban and Holland, 2015; Lucarelli 2014a). Thus, it would contribute to the formation of a more theory-based paradigm.

Some of the conclusions should be formulated from the literature overview. Firstly, research on the EU perceptions among public has showed little awareness/knowledge of the EU. The EU is more visible in its neighborhood rather in Asia-Pacific (NCRE studies predominately) or in some other distanced location (see Chaban et al. 2013, 440). Secondly, media is mostly focused on the EU external relations rather than internal affairs. Thirdly, the EU images among elites and media relate to the economic criteria and the EU is almost never seen as a norm-setter/promoter except regarding the EaP region with rare exceptions. Finally, the most important finding was about the huge ‘gap between potential and actual leadership [...] perceived [...] by [...] the elites and the public’ (Lucarelli 2014a, 8).

The tendency is not optimistic: some of the elites may perceive the EU as a power at the moment, but not to label it with leadership capabilities. Although there is appreciation and respect towards the EU, there is a lack of confidence in the ability of the union to transform its potential into actual leadership. Perceptions of the EU in multi-lateral negotiations with less developed countries regarding partnership were condemned as being built on the false premises. Even though the EU is criticized for being internally divided, in some negotiations it is observed as a consolidated player (Lucarelli 2014a, 11).

The EU external perceptions have not been studied all over the globe and Central Asia region has been left on the margins without attention, whereas perceptions in Asia-Pacific and Russia, Israel, the United States and Canada, for instance, have been studied in different projects. Indisputably, Asia-Pacific perceptions cumulated the richest data, while American and African studies are still under-explored. Besides, there is lack of state-of-the-art empirical body of research that forces scholars to refer to old and, in the worst case, irrelevant data anymore.

1.3. Research Gap & Research Questions

The main goal of the thesis is to understand how Kazakhstan sees the EU and its actions in the region and globally. The position of the EU at the current stage in world politics is vulnerable due to several endogenous and exogenous factors, namely the Ukrainian crisis and sanctions against Russia, Brexit, migration crisis, terrorist attacks and the rise of populist and nationalist movements. This thesis will help to answer to Falkner's (2017, 389) question 'How have external perceptions of the EU's position, power and influence in global affairs changed in recent years, particularly in response to ongoing crises in the EU's internal governance?' Assuming that there is a change in perceptions of the EU because of the events mentioned above, it would be important to find out if those dramatic changes found any response in Kazakhstan, since no research on Kazakhstani perceptions of the EU evaluating this period has been done before.

The overall goal of this thesis is to trace images/ perceptions of the EU in Kazakhstani public data materials (mass media) and materials obtained from the author-conducted interviews with the elite of Kazakhstani society, namely media, NGO's, business representatives and experts. Thus, the thesis will focus on some of the characteristics inherent to the EU external perceptions. Thus, the following research will be country-specific, cohort-specific, time-specific - 'micro histoire' (see Barcevičius et al. 2015) and comparative, which addresses the gap in the EU external perceptions literature. Previous studies on perceptions of the EU in Kazakhstan are very fragmented and limited and may no longer fulfil today's needs (see Peyrouse 2014; Ospanova et al., 2016; Ospanova et al., 2017). With the help of my empirical study I hope to contribute to the conceptual framework regarding external perceptions and the relationship between them, and the potential power of the EU. I want to study whether the idea of the EU as an economic power solely holds true. Moreover, the normative aspect of Europe to deliver its norms and values to Kazakhstan was rarely considered before, especially from the Kazakhstani side using 'outside-in' and external perceptions approach (see Cenciarelli 2017).

Even now we can see certain steps towards the West reflected in the transition of the Kazakh alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin. Additionally, one can expect a change of the political elites in Kazakhstan at some point in the future. That could be the opportunity for the EU to use the collected feedback in a shape of external observations to self-reflect and to identify key points

where interests of both sides could be satisfied. Kazakhstan as a leader of CA region, member of the Eurasian Economic Union and Russia's neighbor is of importance for the EU.

Therefore, the research focus of the thesis is on the European Union as an actor in International relations, and its external perception in particular. Thereby, the research questions are formulated as follows:

- 1) How is the EU perceived in Kazakhstan? I am particularly interested in whether the EU is perceived as a normative power. As sub-questions, I will also ask what other images are dominant and whether public media perceptions differ from perceptions constructed in interviews.
- 2) What do Kazakhstani perceptions tell about the EU?

The broader scope of this research is to step outside of the Eurocentric vision and to contribute to the EU external perceptions research, the normative power Europe debate and European international identity scholarship.

1.4. Data and Methods

Methodologically, this thesis is multi-layered. I analyze mass media articles collected from two Kazakhstani newspapers, namely, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* (KazPravda) and Tengrinews portal with the qualitative content analysis (QCA). I chose these two sources firstly, due their circulation, and secondly, because they are popular among elites and significant part of the society. Overall, 86 articles in Russian from a three-year period from January 1st, 2015 until December 31st, 2017 are included in my research. The analysis contains both quantitative and qualitative metrics. Next, I make a QCA of interviews conducted with Kazakhstani elites. 16 interviews were conducted between October and December 2017. Whilst searching for representatives from the elite, I was holding in mind that I want to keep a balance between different cohorts. Among those sixteen interviewees, six are academia and think tanks experts, four are media elite representatives, three are NGO representatives, two are business elites and one is an expert working for the government.

In my study, I rely on Schreier's (2012) approach to QCA. QCA is systematic, reduces data and is flexible to a certain degree. QCA is flexible in the way that the researcher has the opportunity to adjust the coding frame to his/her material (Boyatzis, 1998; Rustemeyer, 1992 in Schreier 2012, 7). In this paper, I apply a combined strategy in which the main categories

(themes) are based on inductive coding (data-driven strategy), whilst sub-categories (norm-setting and connotation) are derived deductively from theory and logic (concept-driven).

1.5. Thesis Structure

This dissertation will be divided into seven chapters including the introduction. The second chapter will present a short overview of the most important achievements in the EU-Kazakhstan relations and will emphasize such spheres of cooperation as economy, political dialogue and development, which stands also for the democratization of Kazakhstan. The next chapter introduces the conceptual framework: external perceptions and normative power. External perceptions concepts will be described in the following order: perceptions as a conceptual approach, the concept of image, the EU's international identity and external image, and role theory in international negotiations. The normative power debate will be covered from various theoretical perspectives. The chapter will be outlined with external perceptions studies where the NPE concept is applied.

The fourth chapter will elaborate on the EU external perceptions literature with specific attention to the empirical side. Here, global perceptions studies and Kazakhstani perceptions of the EU will be reviewed separately.

The next chapter will elucidate the data collection process in detail and provide an overview of the methods applied in the study. The sixth chapter will be analytical and it will cover mass media and interviews analyses followed by extensive discussion. Finally, the conclusion will not only summarize all important findings but will also elaborate on limitations and recommendations for the future research.

2. EU-KAZAKHSTAN RELATIONS

To start with, this section provides information on the EU-Kazakhstan cooperation with emphasis on political dialogue and economic aspect, the issues of civil society and development cooperation. This chapter also presents valuable information that justifies why it is necessary to study the Kazakhstani perceptions of the EU.

Relations between Kazakhstan and the EU were established February 2, 1993. The main document serving the base of the EU-Kazakhstan *political dialogue* was Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) signed in 1995 but entering into force only in 1999. During 25 years of cooperation the EU-Kazakhstan relations had their ups and downs. If in the beginning cooperation primarily was based on trade and investments, after 2002 political dialogue increased and such areas as Justice, Internal affairs, Transport and Energy. Nonetheless, slowly EU-Kazakhstan collaboration has been transforming from donor-recipient status to the partnership level.

It is worth mentioning that the EU also collaborates with Kazakhstan within the Central Asia framework. Signing the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (EPCA) between the European Union and Kazakhstan on December 21, 2015 in Astana represented ‘the first of its kind signed by the EU’ with one of the CA states. Moreover, it placed the EU and Kazakhstan cooperation on a new level (European External Action Service, 2017). It clearly illustrates Kazakhstan’s central place in how the EU sees engagement in Central Asia. Highlighting the strategic value of CA for the EU, Mogherini while being a chair of the 11th EU-Central Asia Ministerial Meeting declared: ‘What happens in this region of the world is extremely important for the European Union’ (Putz, 2015).

The importance of *economy and trade relations* between the EU and Kazakhstan is beyond doubts. The EU is Kazakhstan’s first trade partner representing over one third of its external trade. Moreover, the EU is the largest investor for Kazakhstan: During years 2000-2014 the EU invested around USD 106 billion (European External Action Service, 2016). Kazakhstan’s export dominates with raw materials: fuels, minerals and chemicals. The EU exports primarily manufactured products, mainly, machinery, transport equipment, chemicals, medical devices and pharmaceuticals (ibid.). Energy cooperation with Kazakhstan is strengthening EU’s energy security ensuring diversification of energy flows to Europe. Practical side of this cooperation is reflected in Memorandum of Understanding on Energy Cooperation, concluded in 2006.

Kazakhstan's role is increasing in the EU energy landscape and therefore, the EPCA shows the new level of cooperation in this field based on 'mutual interest, reciprocity, transparency and predictability' (ibid.). However, this agreement is also important due to 'exchange of information on energy efficient and environmentally-friendly technologies' (ibid.). Overall, EPCA contributes to the high level of environmental protection.

The EU is active in *development cooperation* and promoting *democratization and human rights* in Kazakhstan. There are two ongoing projects focused on Kazakhstan's transition to a Green Economy Model (2015-2018, EUR 7.1 M) and support to Judicial Reform in Kazakhstan (2015-2018, EUR 5.5 M) (European External Action Service, 2017).

The EU assists Kazakhstan's development through such instruments the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the Development and Cooperation Instrument (DCI), the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) and education support merging the former TEMPUS and Erasmus programs through the Erasmus + program focusing on academic mobility and students' exchange (European External Action Service, 2016). The EU is interested in strengthening the role of civil society in Kazakhstan, which is why the Union supports legal reforms under EIDHR with a budget EUR 1 million per year (ibid.). The EU has always been supporting social and economic reforms, democratization and the reformation of justice sector.

Regarding the EU Central Asia programs, the Border Management Program in Central Asia (BOMCA) and the Central Asia Drug Action Program (CADAP) are currently in force. The most significant change is creation of the New Strategy for Central Asia which is planned to be launched in 2018. It seems that the EU is trying to avoid any geopolitical games rather it wants to achieve constructive cooperation with the region (Lamos and Vrbin, 2018).

Evidently, Kazakhstan is a leader in CA region and New Partnership Agreement with the EU shows the rise of mutual interest between the EU and Kazakhstan. As Boonstra and Tsertsvadze claimed, 'the EU should not shy away from making democratization and human rights a central aspect of [the EPCA] negotiations'. Nonetheless, still economy agenda dominates in the EPCA concluded in 2015, even though democracy, the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms, sustainable development and civil society cooperation are covered by the Agreement. Certainly, 'Kazakhstan based on democratic values, good governance and rule of law would make the best partner in the region' for the EU (Boonstra and Tsertvadze, 2013). Despite the EU's efforts are modest in the region and in Kazakhstan specifically in comparison

to the EU Neighborhood, still it is necessary to step outside of the highly-political dialogue and to observe the EU's initiatives and success or failures in the view of Kazakhstani elites, experts, civil society and mass media if they are present in the discourse.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The current chapter outlines the following literature as my theoretical framework for studying Kazakhstani perceptions of the EU and their meaning for understanding EU's international (external) identity/ role in international relations. I am particularly interested in normative power discussions and therefore, I study whether the claim on the EU as a normative power holds true in the context. I will first discuss the EU external perceptions as a conceptual frame, which includes main concepts used by external perceptions scholars. Then, I proceed with discussion in NPE and elaborate on the EU external perceptions' studies which are focused on normative power research.

3.1. External Perceptions

In this chapter, I want to emphasize the complexity of the external perceptions approach because of the multidisciplinary nature of the theory with perceptions being on the crossroads of IR, the EU studies, political science, communication studies and political psychology. There is no clear borderline where perceptions as a theoretical approach ends and where perceptions as a methodological concept starts.

Despite undergoing through many dramatic and successful transformations during more than a half century, the EU, nonetheless has continued to show its 'distinctiveness' (e.g., Lucarelli 2007) to the international community. How can the EU policy-makers and the research community assess if the message or image sent was perceived the same way on the other side of the world, in multilateral settings or even by the EU's neighbors? I suggest that external perceptions by local experts, the media, the public and NGOs is the only way to retrieve the truth about the EU images abroad. Notwithstanding, there are theoretical gaps and growing 'conceptual confusion' in the field of the EU external perceptions (see Chaban & Holland, 2014). The approach used in this paper implies that the EU is in the place of the responsive and reflexive 'Other' when the EU's performance can be assessed by its perception overseas and can be regulated by the EU itself if necessary.

Perception is a broad concept inheriting *various descriptions* and *implications* from different fields. The starting point for IR research on perceptions dates to the 1950s (see Boulding, 1959), when *image* theory was formed as a foreign policy analysis approach. A number of other approaches have appeared since then. Some of the research does not belong to the specific framework and consequently stays alongside, while most contemporary studies on perceptions

can be grouped according to their dimension and theoretical underpinning. Recently Mišík (2013) introduced his vision of the perceptions landscape: he evokes division of external perceptions on two groups – image and role theory. Image and role theories’ models of perceptions’ research are as both sides of the same coin: they serve for understanding ‘the EU’s outreach to its foreign partners’ but from the different angles (also see Barcevičius et al. 2015). Although I support this categorization and admit that these theories have affected contemporary the EU external perceptions research, they are not the only choice for the EU external perceptions scholars and other conceptual trajectories will be demonstrated below.

While Mišík (2013) explains the EU external perceptions through the theoretical division between image and role theory, Chaban and Holland argue that these theories are not dominant in the area. There are at least two more models of research belonging to the contemporary study of perceptions, namely the EU international identity (e.g. Duchene, 1972; Manners, 2002), as well as the EU foreign policy actions, capabilities and goals (ibid.). Chaban and Holland criticize both approaches mentioned above which failed to understand the complicated reality of the EU’s external outreach and presence. However, they accept the NPE hypothesis (Manners, 2002) and believe that external perceptions could belong to one of the cultural factors constituting the NPE (see more Chapter 3.3.). (Chaban and Holland 2014, 8)

Current scholarship of the external perceptions field could be divided into three major groups, each of which is presented by a project based on comparative empirical data approach (NCRE studies, GARNET and ‘New Roles of the EU in International Politics’) based on comparative empirical data approach which is in detail described in the literature review. In this Chapter, I want to emphasize that in all those projects various approaches towards external perceptions have been applied.

3.1.1. Perceptions as a Conceptual Approach

Chaban and Holland (2008, 1) state that formulation of the *external perceptions* as a *theoretical approach* started from the following questions:

Does the EU have its own geo-political and socio-economic identity? [...] Does the process of European integration affect how the EU is seen among major global players? Is the Union satisfied with this vision, compared to its self-perceptions? Where has all the talk about identity come from?

In addition, their comparative study on the EU perceptions in Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Thailand was based on an assumption that

[The] international reality is not merely the product of physical forces and material power, whether military and economic, but is a phenomenon socially constructed through discursive power (the power of knowledge, ideas, culture, ideology, and language). (idem, 6)

What do perceptions mean and how do they relate to images? How are these concepts defined and why they are of great importance? Here, I will try to answer these questions. Chaban and Holland explained their motivation to study Asian perceptions to understand relations between West and East. The status of Asia–Europe relation has been manifested in people minds ‘as fundamentally different and even opposing entities’ (Chaban and Holland 2010, 127). In their work they refer to Alexander Wendt’s social constructivist theory combined with Herbert Mead’s symbolic interactionist framework was taken to show the process of ‘social learning of international actors’ (ibid.). They highlighted the importance of how ‘actors come to see themselves as a reflection of how they think Others see or “appraise” them, in the “mirror” of Others’ representations of the Self’ (Mead 1934, cf. Wendt 1999, 327).

Chaban and Holland (2014) further argue that the ‘multidisciplinarity’ of EU perceptions is ‘a challenge’ for scholars who want to contribute to this field. That is why mapping key theoretical paradigms is fundamental to identify already existing conceptual models and it helps to start a productive discussion on how ‘to stimulate future theorization ... of EU external perceptions’ (idem, 6). Research of the leading NCRE scholars is also famous due to application of the ‘capabilities– expectations gap’ hypothesis with ‘political communication theories (framing, agenda-setting and common knowledge paradigm)’ (idem, 8).

The paramount input of Chaban and Holland’s book (2014) into conceptualization of external perceptions is the proposal to clarify the distinction between concepts of ‘*perception*’, ‘*categories*’, ‘*stereotype*’ and ‘*image*’,. With regard to perception they relied on Shiming’s definition of ‘*perception*’ as the ‘result of the subjective or psychological cognition of the observer rather than the objective reflection of the object that is being observed’ (Shiming 2010, 269 as cited in idem., 9). There are three levels of perceptions’ prospect namely ‘*actor-centered*’ (Herrmann 1985, 1997), ‘*location-specific*’ (Tsuruoka 2008) and ‘*globally-oriented*’ perceptions (Chaban and Magdalena, 2014). Such factors as ‘the perceived relative capability of an actor, the perceived threat/or opportunity represented by that actor, and the perceived culture of that [particular] actor’ shape perceptions (Herrmann, 1985; Herrmann et al., 1997 in Chaban and Holland, 2014). Tsuruoka (2008) added that perceptions are dependent on the *location*: the perceived changes matter within an actor as well as outside of it. Further, Chaban and Magdalena (2014) developed the paradigm and reveal that perceptions are ‘*cohort-*

specific'. It follows that in my case too one should study how different layers of Kazakhstani elite perceive the EU.

Indeed, Chaban and Holland (2014, 3) argue that, EU external perceptions research was motivated 'by the models used to explain EU international identity... as well as, EU foreign policy, capabilities and goals'. The EU external perceptions were discovered being highly *issue-specific, multi-layered* and *vary across different issue-areas* (Chaban et al. 2013).

Another dimension is provided by Didelon-Loiseau and Grasland's (2014, 64-65) statement that EU external perceptions have temporal dimension in addition to location and issue-specific criteria. Time-related categorization of actor's image happens on the following levels: 'micro histoire' – usually it is a reaction on war, revolution or crisis and it occurs in a short period of time; 'histoire conjuncture' – is a response on economic or political change and this period is longer than previous one, and can take 25-50 years; and 'histoire de longue durée' – is an outcome of historical events over centuries, for instance, colonial past or cultural or linguistic transformation. Stumbaum (2015) emphasizes that local conditions can effect on the EU and Europe perceptions, specifically 'historical entanglements, differences in political system, education and training or cultural proximities / differences'. (see Barcevičius et al. 2015, 14)

Importantly, *perceptions cause categorization*: 'When we perceive our environment, we rapidly integrate large amounts of incoming stimulus information into categories that help to guide our understanding of the world' (Brosch et al., 2010, 377 cited in Chaban and Holland 2014, 10). It means that categorization as a cognitive process is a 'fundamental aspect... of perception' (ibid.). People have no other choice as to categorize information in order to process it and not to overload that cognitive capacity human beings have. Categories in this sense is seen as being a 'way of organizing the world in our minds, creating mental maps for working out how we view the world and negotiating our ways through it in our everyday social relations and interactions' (Pickering 2001, 2). Categories do not necessarily have to be fixed, they can be temporal. Therefore, I also emphasize that my research design relies on the original thematic categorization developed from the data to highlight the most important aspects of perception.

From the IR prospective perception can be determined as a 'constellation of features that cluster together in a meaningful way' (Hermann et al. 1997). The essence of Hermann's definition is in the influence of such factors as culture, values on the interplay of mutually formed images and expectations created by the abyss between 'Self' and 'Other'. The *assessment of the reaction to the actor's otherness* can be done through *positive* or *negative* demeanor and this

is exactly what I am referring to in the analytical chapter. Notably, ‘interaction between actors can lead to the mutual reformulation of identity and herewith to reformulation of perceptions’ (Peeren & Horstkotte 2007 cited in Barcevičius et al. 2015, 13) which shows the ability of actors to change themselves through perceptions.

Pickering (2001, 3) defines stereotypes as ‘elements of broad cultural practices and processes, carrying with them quite definite ideological views and values’. *Stereotypes* are explained as ‘a simplified categorization of the world that exists in the long-term memory and is resistant to sudden environmental pressures’ (Chaban and Holland 2008, 8). Sometimes categorization equates with stereotyping, although it does not have the same meaning as four distinctions between the two processes have been observed. First, in comparison with categories, *stereotypes are inflexible*. This is due to the reason that it is easier ‘to resort to one-sided representations in the interests of order, security and dominance’ than to ‘allow for a more complex vision, a more open attitude, a more flexible way of thinking’ (Pickering 2001, 3–4 cited in Chaban and Holland 2014, 10). Second, stereotyping ‘structure is ... imprecise and inaccurate’ (ibid.). Citing Bronfen (1992), Pickering (2001, 4) talks about the stereotyping process as an ‘illusion of precision’ and an ‘illusion of control and order’. Third, stereotyping is ‘resilient’ (Chaban and Holland 2014, 10) what basically stays for ability to activate ‘a sense of certainty, regularity and continuity’ – to deliver the idea how ‘the ways things should be’ (Pickering 2001, 4). Last but not least, *stereotypes* are about *judgement* and *assessment*, additionally, they are ‘the seedbed of prejudices, which in their way rationalize and “confirm” stereotyped notions’ (Beller 2007, 7 in idem, 11). Thus, *images are the products of categorization and stereotyping* (see Harris 2006 in Chaban and Holland 2014, 10). Chaban and Holland (2014, 10) rely on cognitive scientists’ definition of the notion of the image as:

a reference to some aspect of the world which contains within its own structure and in terms of its own structure a reference to the act of cognition which generated it. It must say, not that the world is like this, but that it was recognized to have been like this by the image-maker, who leaves behind this record: not of the world, but of the act. (Cohen, n.d.)

External perceptions are always about ‘the dual nature of international communication (a process and a product)’ (Chang et al. 2001 in Chaban and Holland 2014, 7). As Stråth (2002, 397) noted, ‘Europe does not exist without non-Europe and can only be realized in the mirror of Others’ (in idem, 3). The theory of ‘Othering’ (Pickering 2001) could be a bridge builder for the explanation of multi-disciplinary analysis (see Chaban and Holland 2014). One of the ‘Othering’ channels is identifying what expectations external ‘Others’ have. The more the EU

grows its potential and capability as an international actor, the more important it becomes to prevent ‘cognitive gap’ – an imbalance between low expectations of the external world and the EU’s motive to be known as an international political authority (Chaban and Holland 2008, 4). Also, Chaban and Holland (ibid.) use the idea of external identification of the EU presented by Samur:

This constructivist approach to international relations is especially appropriate in the case of the EU, because the EU aspires to be more than an international society: a supranational one. This means that the EU needs to create its own norms, values and practices to a greater extent than any international society.

Theory of ‘Othering’ presented by Pickering (2001), activates the notion of ‘the responsive Other’, at the same time, this theoretical model is a viable solution for EU perceptions research due to possibility of ‘avoiding traps of Eurocentrism’ (Chaban and Holland 2014, 11). This theory helps to identify the ‘Other’ to the world and to put the EU in the place of the ‘Other’.

For nation states, it is a supranational union of members that surrendered certain aspects of sovereignty; for multilateral organizations, it is an intergovernmental arrangement with centralized forces at play; for developing countries, the EU is a wealthy and affluent actor; for economically dynamic third countries and regions, the ‘EU in crisis’ is a troubling economic reality; for locations far away from the European continent, the EU is a distant international player; for the EU’s non-EU neighbors, the EU is an immediate reference; and for various political regimes, the EU is a polity characterized by distinct democratic norms and values. (idem., 12)

According to Peeren and Horstkotte (2007, 11), the interplay between the Self and the Other can lead to either a ‘productive reformulation of identity and a generous, respectful relation to alterity [...] or [...] a negating reaction or a rigid entrenchment of the self’. The positive side of the theory of ‘Othering’ helps to use external perceptions as a possibility to revisit the EU’s identity to defeat its own restraints. In addition to that, the prospects of the Other inform about the Self: ‘The Other says and reveals far more about the self and its conditioned and self-directed possibilities than about the apparently all-determined Other’ (Pickering 2001, 74).

It is quite clear, that professionals from different fields develop the EU external perceptions from their own prospective and that is why no one uniting theory exist. Quite often ‘the capability-expectation gap and NPE’ were used ‘as explanatory theories’ for the EU perceptions findings (Chaban and Holland 2015, 675).

3.1.2. *Image*

Imagology is a recently growing literary scholarship field referring to the notion of ‘image’ as a ‘mental silhouette of the other’ (Beller 2007, 4 in Chaban and Holland 2014, 10). This field also considers that the tone of images (positive or negative) depends on ‘cultural discontinuities and differences resulting from language, mentalities, everyday habits, and religions’ (ibid.). Among the IR scholars who have conceptualized images are Boulding (2011) and Harris (2006) (ibid.). According to Boulding (2011, 342) images represent ‘the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structures of the behavior unit, or its internal view of itself and its universe’. As Harris (2006, 159) notes, states position each other ‘through [their] own identity, place and perspective in the world’. Mitchell’s (1986, 10) image typology consists of five categories: graphic (pictures, statues, designs), optical (mirrors, projections), perceptual (sense data, ‘species’, appearances), mental (dreams, memories, ideas, phantasmas), verbal (metaphors, descriptions)’. (Chaban and Holland 2014, 10-11)

However, Elgström (2007) underlines that images are change-resistant, what is more, there are certain conditions when images received first dominate ignoring and rejecting new information (Jervis 1976, 291-296) what is opposite to the claim of Chaban and Holland (2014) that images should not be equated to the stereotypes.

Scholars, contributed to the volume ‘Communicating Europe in Time of Crisis’ (Chaban and Holland 2014), worked with verbal and textual images in policy-making, public and elite opinion as well as news media. In some cases, research is multilayered, for example in Elgström (2014, 27-44), Lucarelli (2014b, 45-64), Pardo (2014, 165-197); while in other cases discourses are separated (see Chaban and Bain 2014, 118-142 on the EU images in news; Didelon-Loiseau and Grasland 2014, 65-96, Chaban and Beltyukova 2014, 143-174 on public opinion; Stumbaum 2014, 97-117 on the EU images in elite opinion).

The other article ‘Russian Images of the European Union: Before and after Maidan’ dedicated to the current crisis in the EU-Russia relations published by Natalia Chaban, Ole Elgström and Olga Gulyaeva (2017) has considerably contributed in generally to the image and perceptions academic literature as well as particularly to the Russian image of the EU. An exceptional feature of this study is in longitudinal nature of the research: it compares images found in data gathered in 2011-2012 and in 2015 in newspapers and public opinion related to the EU.

The EU had to respond on the challenge of the current world with the 2009 Lisbon Treaty that put priority on the EU's international image and revision of its foreign policy in order to attain a role of 'a major global player' (Chaban et al, 2012,). The goal of the one of the research piece was to find out whether economic situation recently affected the external perceptions and the EU's external image. By the image they meant 'the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structures of the behavior unit, or its internal view of itself and its universe' (Boulding 1969, 423 in Chaban and Holland 2013, 5). Research design was built on systematic comparative exploration of the EU external perceptions in 'Asia-Pacific giants' which are Japan, South Korea, China, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, and Russia.

Images were taken for the theoretical background of the study. Elgström conceptualizes images 'as mental pictures, composed of our cumulated experience-based "knowledge" of the surrounding world' (2000, 68). Homogeneous images and following from them identity constructions might influence negatively on the EU because of not seeing 'own failings and deficiencies' (Diez and Pace 2007 in Chaban et al. 2017, 6). More likely it leads to inconsistency, misperceptions and construction of the wrong feedback, misunderstanding between the actor and the receiver. Elgström calls it 'the black-and-white nature' of the images, which does not allow appearance of the images in between. Thus, he claims that judging the partner in such a manner demonstrates that 'you are not open to the arguments of the other side' (idem., 9). Political 'reality' is understood and interpreted by policymakers through the 'cognitive organizing devices', images play roles of 'road maps' and 'focal points' (Chaban et al. 2017, 481). Research conducted by Chaban et al. (2017) has tended to focus on such actor-oriented image segments as 'images of Others' intentions (good or bad?), capabilities (strong or weak?), and cultural and political status (inferior or superior?)' (Elgström 2000; Herrmann 2013, 403-433 in idem., 482).

In the other joint project, Chaban and Elgström (2014) applied Hermann's theory of images formation and transferred them on the EU and Emerging Powers relations in the time of the Euro debt crisis taking internal developments of both sides into account. Such aspects as perception of relative capability of the EU as actor, perception of threat/ threat opportunity outgoing from the EU, and culture perception of the Union were considered (Hermann et al. 1997; Hermann 1985). Hermann et al. (1997, 407) himself wrote that 'images of the Other are not collections of unrelated traits but rather a constellation of features that cluster together in a meaningful way'.

One of the recent studies guided by Chaban and Kelly (2017), presents new methodological view point on the EU perceptions in Australia and New Zealand. Their paper is a pioneer of two theories' combination – image theory (Herrmann 2013) and conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 2003) – what means linking IR and cognitive linguistics, consequently (Chaban and Kelly 2017, 693). This research based on an empirical tool – a four-tiered model of conceptual metaphors (Zhabotynska, 2011 as cited in Chaban and Kelly 2017) to determine the process of the EU images construction innovatively. In addition, it empirically and systematically evaluates cognitive and emotive components of the EU external images change.

3.1.3. EU's International Identity and External Images

If Natalia Chaban and Martin Holland focus on the EU external perceptions itself, Sonia Lucarelli introduces the explanation of the link between the EU's self-perception and external image. According to Lucarelli, there is huge potential for research in the area of evaluating and analyzing “‘what’” kind of ‘stance’ the EU represents outside of its borders and that it is already enough research on “‘how’” to lead its own freestanding policy (Lucarelli 2007, 26). Thus, loads of papers describe strong and weak points of the Union but from the self-assessment angle. And still there is deficiency of literature into determination of whether self-representational views of the EU match with the surrounding parties' opinion, so-called other's view (ibid.).

After cautious investigation of the literature on the Academic Representation of the EU as an International Actor, it became clear that the Union builds identity of the ‘civilian power’ (Duchêne 1972, 1973), ‘normative power’ (Manners 2002) and it adopts a ‘structural foreign policy’ (Keukeleire 2000, 2002). By means of that, all the images' characteristics can be categorized on three groups. First, the EU as a global actor want to represent its own interests on the political arena, but it also wants to spread the values. They are listed below:

security, independence and integrity ... democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law, peace, ...conflicts [prevention] and strengthen international security, ... eradicating poverty; ... progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade; to preserve and improve the quality of the environment and the sustainable management of global natural resources...; ... promote stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance (Constitution, Art. III-292, Title V as cited in Lucarelli 2007, 28).

Second, the EU does want to share this values with the external world but only in a peaceful way. Third, the Union becomes responsible for the influence on the world globally. (Lucarelli 2007, 30)

Concerning theoretical framework, the European Union Foreign Policy including ‘external relations, common foreign and security policy’ was taken as a basement for the research. Meanwhile, ‘political identity’ was considered as a complex of social and political values which needed to be interpreted (Lucarelli 2007). ‘Identity is not given’, it is shaped by people’s will and ability to perform on the international arena and external views affects the internal political identity. Finally, the third component is external image concept which is possible to estimate choosing ‘a set of the countries’ and four relevant constituencies (public opinion, political elites, the press and organized civil society) in each country through a prism of ‘public speeches, the media, opinion polls, websites, secondary literature’ (Lucarelli 2007, 31-32).

Thesis on the EU’s ‘distinctiveness’, proposed by Lucarelli (2007), is supported by previous research on Europe’s peculiarity and the EU as being ‘better’ version of the international players, namely civilian power (Telò 2006; Whitman 1998), normative power (Manners 2002), structural foreign policy (Keukeleire 2000, 2004), normative area (Therborn 2001), gentle power (Padoa - Schioppa 2001) and norm- maker (Björkdahl 2005; see also Checkel 1999) (as cited in Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2010, 3). In this case, they equate external images with the ‘one of the variables that contributes to shaping a European political identity among the Europeans’ (idem, 1).

Thus, fundamental components of ‘EU/ropean’ political identity are ‘self-rhetorical representation, public debate and mirror images’ (ibid.). The EU’s ‘distinctiveness’ brought criticism on whether this concept could be applied to the EU case (Diez 2005; Sjursen 2006 as cited in idem, 3) and brought a possibility to investigate experimentally ‘both the EU’s coherence as a civilian power and its effectiveness’ (ibid.).

There is debate on what is shaping the identity. Lucarelli and Fioramonti (2007; 2009; 2010) support the view that the EU’s identity can be political, established on social and political values and principles that were adopted by Europeans and were recognized as integral parts of a political group (Cerutti 2003, 27 cited in Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2010, 4). Interpretation of political values happens through the frameworks of policies, institutions, history and culture and this all constitute political identity (ibid.).

Concept of Other, mainly introduced by Neumann (1996b) and Rumelili (2004) as IR scholars and Taylor (1994) and Turner et al. (1987) as socio-psychological researchers, was utilized as one of the important component of the research. ‘Others’ should have such qualities as ‘recognition, distinctiveness, labelling and bordering’. (idem, 4)

Combination of Social Identity Theory (SIT) with IR, brought new identification of identity due to ability to highlight ‘long-term/framework variables and interactional/contingent factors’ (idem, 5). SIT works with ‘political identity, historical memories and socially shaped conceptions of world order to be fundamental components of the prevalent cognitive maps within a society’ (ibid.). With the help of foreign policy analysis and IR, ‘contingent’ factors influencing perception of the ‘other’ were revealed: ‘positional variables’ (what means preferences, interests, perspectives, and a social role assigned for a player), ‘power-related variables that account for asymmetries with respect to the EU’; ‘interaction variables’ (for example, experience of the ‘other’ with the EU in bilateral or multilateral relations) (ibid.).

Instead of focusing on the ‘international identity’ Lucarelli (2007) prefers to use the term ‘role’ (cf. Holsti 1970; Walker 1987; Aggestam 1999). At the same time, the role-constructing theory belongs to constructivists’ direction and it is both ‘shaped by an actor’s identity and the others’ expectations’ (Wendt 1999, 227-8 in Lucarelli 2006).

This project on the external image is not only interesting for the EU foreign policy, ‘but it could become part of a wider-reaching program[m] to understand the processes of self-identification, Lucarelli (2014, 11) also calls for more coherent and structured theoretical framework. Critique on disregards of ‘mutual’ perceptions is very strong and justifiable from her side, because scholars (Pilar Bilkin, Thomas Diez, Ted Hopf, Iver Neumann, Bahar Rumelili) showed no interest into the evaluation of the impact of external images on Europe’s identity formation (ibid.).

Lucarelli argues that a new research design should be developed, including *the perceptions of the ‘Other’, role conceptualization, the connection between processes of identity formation, and external images*. In addition, she suggests maintaining *wider constructivist approach* by focusing on ‘the interactive nature of perceptions’ and consolidating methodology to detect ‘the mutually constructed elements’ despite some of the research is already done (for example, Asia perceptions in Europe) (ibid.).

3.1.4. Role Theory in International Negotiations

Elgström brings another prospective on the external perceptions because his main interest is in *international negotiations* and *foreign policy change*. Looking on the general trend, there is a tendency of assessing the EU leadership and role in the multilateral projects through the prism of trade, development and environmental policy.

To show whether the EU was perceived as a major *power* and a leading actor/ *leader* in international trade negotiations (WTO) by outsiders was of Elgström's main interest. Elgström asserts that the 'EU leadership aspirations has been challenged' (2011, 311). Taking the leadership concept as the basement, the author refers to Underdal's (1994, 178) definition of leaderships as 'an asymmetrical relationship of influence, where one actor guides or directs the behavior of others towards a certain goal over a certain period of time'.

Previous studies in this field revealed that leaders need to have certain qualities which are *coherence* and *credibility* to be eligible for the assignment of such a status (Elgström 2007; cf. Gupta and Grubb 2000). Typology presented by Gupta and Grubb (2000, 18-23) is the most appropriate for the leadership research which distinct structural, instrumental and directional leadership. Structural leadership means superiority due to material or political resources. Instrumental leadership signifies ability of implementing political skills in negotiations and creativity in adjusting the needs of different parties. Directional leadership denotes 'leading by example' (Elgström 2011, 313).

He listed at least three reasons why to study outsiders' perceptions of the EU. First of all, judgements of external observers are a 'source of knowledge' about the EU and makes it to be aware of the objectives and capabilities, additionally, it serves for the implementation in the EU foreign policy (Elgström 2007, 951). Second, external perceptions of the EU 'help to shape EU identity and roles' (idem, 952). Third, Elgström testifies that the 'impact of EU external policies may to a certain degree depend on how other relevant actors evaluate these policies' (ibid.). It can be explained by the idea of attracting followers if the EU wants to be a leader. The interest to follow the Union escalates if the EU's policies are estimated as coherent and consistent and if they are seen legitimate (Vogt 2006, 5; Rhodes 1998, 6 in ibid.). Elgström refers to Hurd's (1999) definition of legitimacy as a 'subjective quality, defined by others' perceptions' (ibid.). 'Paying attention to how the EU is viewed abroad helps us to evaluate

whether gaps between expectations and realities have affected the “reach” of EU influence’ (Rhodes 1998, 6 in *ibid.*).

Approaching two-level theory in practice for his interviews, consisting of *power* and *leadership* concepts, Elgström collected valuable empirical material. The EU became a subject of disputes whether it represents ‘traditional, military power’ (see Larsen, 2002; Whitman, 2006) or it is a ‘civilian’ (see Maull, 2006; Rosencrance, 1998; Sjørnsen, 2006) it may belong to ‘normative’ (see Manners, 2002, 2006) power. Focusing on the trade power specifically, there are four sources of power mentioned previously in the scholars’ works. The economic occupancy and overall cloud of the EU, its usage of economic statecraft, the EU serving as a model and influence derived from its formal institutional structure are the main sources of power (Elgström 2007).

Peculiarity of Elgström’s works lays in clarity and orientation on *roles* and *role performance*. His article ‘Leader or Foor-Dragger?’ (2006) resembles as the report and it contains useful findings. Moreover, in my opinion it can serve as a model of the research on the external perceptions due to its explicitness, consistency and tight connection to the theoretical framework. Considering the chosen theoretical framework, it comprises from such components as *external perceptions*, *role theory* and *role performance*, *the leadership* and *power* concepts. Empirical side of this study includes semi-structured interview data collected from delegates of developing and developed countries in the United Nations Forum on Forestry (UNFF), at the Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

According to Elgström and Smith (2006), the role concept is about ‘patterns of expected or appropriate behavior’ (Elgström 2006, 15). Usually, roles are associated with a firm position in social structures and specifically assigned functions and how those should be performed (Holsti 1970, 239-40; Wendt 1999, 227). Nonetheless, *self-images* and *how the others see us* is *confrontable*. However, it is always the preference of the actor how to play during the process of a dynamic interaction with the institutional limitations (Aggestam 2005, 11). Thus, in this case *external perceptions fill the gap between expectations of others and the role the actor chooses while performing on the global arena*. Elgström denotes how Holsti links a state’s national role conception with its foreign policy preferences. Holsti (1970) also persisted on the interdependency of role conceptions and role performances. So-called ‘external perceptions of

the EU foreign policies' as a discovered phenomenon in this research is also worthy of IR scholars' attention (Elgström 2006, 8).

Nonetheless, now the external perceptions become more and more popular because of the needed feedback to react on the constantly changing political and social realm. That is why, substantial amount of the EU external perceptions followers appears worldwide. In my opinion, everything mentioned above, indicates that perception is constructivists' category.

3.2. Normative Power

In my thesis I follow the initial understanding of the concept of normative power introduced by Manners (2002). Notwithstanding, I argue that normative power should not be focused only on the EU nine-norms paradigm but also those other social, educational, economic standards, recognized by norm-receivers which are shaping concept of 'normality' should be taken into account. Here, I show awareness of the current debate among the NPE advocates and critiques in the field and my analysis also will be interpreted with the help of valuable input of other researchers who contributed to the development of the EU's normative power.

There is an ongoing debate concerning the question what kind of international actor the EU represents globally. Usually, European 'distinctiveness', specific identity/role as being 'different' international actor is assigned to the EU mostly by European scholars, so-called Euro-centric debate. Over the years Europe has been labelled with the titles of a 'civilian', a 'soft', a 'post-modern', an 'ethical', a 'transformative' and 'normative power'. However, NPE concept probably provoked the strongest debates among representatives of the research community.

The idea of normative power is not new in international relations. For example, it was referred as a 'power over opinion' (Carr 1962), 'idee force' (Duchêne 1973) and 'ideological power is the power of ideas' (Galtung 1973) (see Manners 2002). Manners emphasizes another crucial characteristic of the normative power, which is 'ability to shape conceptions of 'normal'' (Manners 2002, 239). Nonetheless, the vision of the EU presented by Ian Manners invoked the discussion aiming to reconsider the nature of the EU's role on the international arena.

NPE concept (Manners, 2002) has made an enormous impact to the European Union scholarship, especially in the analysis of the EU foreign policy and external relations. Obviously, the notion attracted the attention of a significant number of critically-minded

scholars along with a large number of supporters who utilized empirical inquiry on the basis of ‘normative power’— ‘not least due to the openness of its central formulations’ (Huells 2011, 87 in Larsen 2014, 897).

What exactly Manners meant talking about the normative power as a unique feature of the EU as an international actor and what motivation he had introducing the term? Manners’ motivation was to go beyond the state centered approaches to the EU mentioned above, namely ‘civilian’ and ‘military’ power. He wanted to enter the theoretical discussion and to make a stand against Bull’s argument of ‘the EU neither being an actor in international affairs nor likely becoming one’ (Bull 1982, 151 in Manners 2002, 235). Instead of focusing on dichotomy between civilian and military power, he introduced notion of normative power by emphasizing ‘ideational impact of the EU’s international identity/role’ (Manners, 2002). Manners presented a different view on the EU as an international actor which is opposite to state alike attitude central for Bull’s and Duchene’s notions (idem., 239). Thus, ‘the EU has evolved into a hybrid of supranational and international forms of governance which transcends Westphalian norms’ (King 1999, 313 in idem., 240).

Manners claims the EU is normatively different actor according to its historical path, hybrid polity and legal base: ‘the central component of normative power Europe is that the EU exists as being different to pre-existing political forms, and that this particular difference predisposes it to act in a normative way’ (Manners 2002, 242). This normative basis of the EU has been developing since 1950 which makes the EU a post-Westphalian organization (structure) (idem., 242-244). Thus, five ‘core’ norms appear from the EU legal base: peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights which were stated in the 1973 Copenhagen Declaration on European identity and which later became founding principles of the art.6 TEU. In addition, Manners suggests four ‘minor’ norms, namely, social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development (arts.2 of TEC and TEU, arts. 6 and 13 of TEC) and good-governance (Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union).

Further, there are six factors shaping the diffusion of norms, ways the EU is spreading its norms in international relations. First, ‘*contagion*’ which is unintentional diffusion of ideas to other actors, for example, regional integration. Second, ‘*informational* diffusion’ includes strategic communication, initiatives by the EU institutions. Third, ‘*procedural* diffusion’ works through institutionalization of relations between the EU and the third party. Fourth, ‘*transference*’ happens through trade, aid, technical assistance and usually is followed by a significant

financial means. Fifth, '*overt diffusion*' is characterized by physical presence of the EU in third countries. Finally, '*cultural filter*' affects impact of the norms being adapted, learned or rejected in third countries. (Manners 2002, 244-245)

Overall, according to Manners,

The EU can be *conceptualized* as a changer of norms in the international system; [...] that the EU acts to change norms in the international system; and [...] that the EU should act to extend its norms into the international system (Manners 2002, 252, emphasis in the original).

Manners does not insist on the application of the normative power only towards the EU but he suggests considering it in addition to the civilian and military power by claiming there is no 'contradictions in terms' (idem., 253). Quite often addressing distinctive international identity of the EU, scholars overlook valuable component constituting its international role: 'the EU is not what it does or what it says but what it is' (idem, 252). This is one of the statements I will refer to while doing the analysis.

Among the debate what kind of power the EU is, 'civilian' (Duchêne 1973), 'military' (Bull 1982) or 'normative' (Manners 2002), one more milestone for the NPE approach towards the EU exists: there is uncertainty of what 'normative power' actually means (see Forsberg 2011). In his review of the NPE, Forsberg identifies four mechanisms of the normative power as 'means of influence': 'by persuasion, by activation of international norms, by shaping the discourse ([...] what is 'normal') and by setting an example for others to follow' (Forsberg 2011, 1184). Also, 'normative power' seems to be more analytically attractive than 'civilian power' for scholars (Forsberg 2011, 2; Bachman, 2013, 19 in Larsen 2014, 897).

Proponents of the NPE assert that the EU does not have aspiration to become a global power following the usual path (military or economic only) but rather the EU wants to promote a distinctive cluster of values and interests that are universal in essence (Manners 2006, 176). Thus, the EU is seeking to sustain a global world order through 'ideas, opinions and conscience' (Diez and Manners 2007, 175).

NPE approach presented by Manners (2002) was criticized in Thomas Diez's (2005) article arguing that consideration of the EU as a NP needs 'a greater degree of self-reflexivity'. Diez questioned distinctiveness of the EU according to the NPE thesis: 'the EU is not the first normative power, and 'self'/ 'other' practices ... can be observed in other historical instances, notably in the practices of the United States' (2005, 635). Nonetheless, Manners refuted his

claim and pointed that Diez's reaction on the NP approach showed that 'the development of constructivist theory-informed EU external/foreign policy studies has led to a wider engagement with the NP approach' (Manners 2006, 169). In their common research paper, they modified normativity nature with a 'reflection and reflectivity' (Diez and Manners, 2007). Nonetheless, NPE was criticized by Federica Bicchì (2005) for being not reflexive enough.

Indeed, combination of normativity and power in NPE is controversial from the very beginning: norms are constructivist features, while the nature of the power lays in realists' approaches. Moreover, there is a critique from structural realists and rationalists concerning the core element of the concept (Whitman 2013). I disagree with their view because they deny the main postulate of the EU being a different *supranational* actor, having a distinctive 'normative' international identity, claiming that the EU does not have a separate actorness from its Member States. Promotion of universal values and interests was criticized for being just a façade for individual self-interest of member states (Hyde-Price 2008). According to Hyde-Price,

the EU was used by its most influential Member States as an instrument for collectively exercising hegemonic power, shaping its "near abroad" in ways amenable to the long-term strategic and economic interests of its Member States (Hyde-Price, 2006, 226–227).

In addition, the NPE was criticized for its conceptual weakness and putative nature due to lack of tools and indicators which could help to show why the EU is a 'normative power' and not 'civilian' or 'civilizing' power (Sjursen 2006). As Forsberg noticed, there is also some criticism of the NPE literature due to the reason that it has overlooked 'the real impact of the EU' (Forsberg 2011, 1189). What is important that 'this view not only includes those sceptics who deny the success of the EU in spreading norms, but it may also question the normative nature of the outcomes when the EU is successful' (ibid.).

Constant criticism towards the original NPE concept has encouraged Manners to clarify and develop his approach (Manners 2008; 2009). One of the Manners' (2008, 45) claim is that 'the EU has been, is, and always will be a normative power in world politics', moreover, it has 'the aim is to promote normative approaches to the study of the EU in world politics'. Manners moved to the explanation of the EU's normative power to even more 'idealistic' conceptualization, nonetheless, initial concept still resembles as a departure point for NPE discussion.

What is interesting, normative power has elicited a vigorous debate among realists and constructivists: while the first insist that NPE is nothing but the coverage of the EU hegemonic interests, the latter believe that pure ideational strength is the main driving force of the EU identity what reflects in its foreign policy.

In my opinion, Whitman's statement is crucial for the further research on normative power and I definitely consider his claim while presenting results of my study. As he proclaimed the '[EU's] ability to alter normality in world politics has not only ideational implications, but also undeniable practical implications' (Whitman 2013, 176). Notion of the EU as 'inconsistent normative power' has to be acknowledged for the further implication too. Taking into account studies of the research circles, Whitman concluded that the EU is not always consistent with its proclaimed normative principle (2013, 183). Overall, Whitman has not only placed the normative power in line with Duchêne's concept and called it a 'neo-normative turn', he also stated that normative power should be considered separately from civilian/ soft and military/ hard power which picked Hyde-Price's argument against NPE to pieces (Whitman 2013).

Indeed, the NPE become a well-established field, however, there are still scholars who belong to the 'third wave' and aiming to open new horizon, to wit, 'structural changes in international relations problematizing Europe's capacity for normative power; ontological and epistemological contestation of normative power Europe; and a contestation of Eurocentricity seen to be intrinsic to normative power Europe' (Whitman, 2013, 186).

In my thesis, based on the observations of the theoretical uncertainties, I argue that normative power should be studied from the 'outside-in' perspective considering the initial understanding of the concept introduced by Manners (2002) because empirical knowledge can help to clarify the terminology, therefore, to intensify internal discussion about the EU's normative identity and normative influence. Otherwise, it does not matter what the EU thinks about itself if it does not find any response in the eyes of the other international actors. In sum, "too sterile" debate about the EU's distinctive identity and normative power is pointless, if it is not recognized as such by non-European, outsiders' views.

3.3. Normative Power and EU External Perceptions

While the majority of the scholars put their attention on developing the NPE theoretical underpinning from the 'inside-out' perspective, quite recently some scholars carried out a series of 'outside-in' studies designed to test the argument about the EU's normative power and its

consistency in foreign policy. On the one hand, one should not accept the self-perception or the European Union's aspiration to be a 'normative actor' by default. On the other hand, the EU can position itself as any 'power' it wants, but the degree of its influence on the international politics will depend on how much this entity is shared by other subjects of international relations. Paradoxically, this field of research is still underestimated by Eurocentric authors, despite the fact that the external perceptions and image of the EU are very important factors in foreign policy and could contribute to the internal European debate.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in exploration of external perceptions the EU actorness outside of its borders, including elaboration on normative power postulate. One of the major contributions is the volume edited by Björkdahl et.al. (2015) where the focus is on the norm-takers 'aiming to advance a research agenda on export and import of EU norms and values' (1). They "turn the table" and critically explore how the EU normative power is perceived and received in the near and the far abroad' (idem., 3) through such norm-receiving instruments as '*adoption*', '*adaptation*', '*resistance*' and '*rejection*' of European norms (idem., 4-6). Basically, they filled the gap by revisiting the notion of the 'cultural filters' to which Manners referred as 'affects the impact of international norms and political learning in third states and organizations leading to learning, adaptation or rejection of norms' (Kinnvall 1995, 61–71 in Manners, 2002). In addition, they asked the question what type of influence the EU inserts on norm-takers: '*intentional, incidental, active or passive*' (Björkdahl et al. 2015, 2).

Manner's 'Normative Power Europe' approach (2002) was partially used by the external perceptions scholars as an identifier of the roles for the EU, other actors and connection between them. Thus, the EU plays a role of sender and other parties are considered as recipients. However, there is a difference in the interpretation of sender's reaction on the receivers' perceptions: Manners and his followers were 'leaving the recipients of EU messages sidelined' (Chaban and Holland 2015, 675).

Manners defines cultural factors as 'the interplay between the construction of knowledge and the creation of social and political identity by the subjects of norm diffusion' (Manners 2002, 245). 'Capability-expectation gap' presented by Hill (1993, 1997) is also valuable for the evaluation of the EU foreign policy actions. Thus, the external perceptions' notion – 'and the necessity to step outside euro-centered foreign policy and international identity studies of the EU' (in Chaban and Holland 2014, 8; Lucarelli, 2014; Elgström and Chaban, 2015) – is a fundamental bridge-builder for these two prominent theories (ibid.).

According to Larsen (2014, 12), the external perceptions literature ‘makes an important contribution to the debate about how and whether to look at the EU as a normative power in international politics’. Larsen (2014) as well as Forsberg (2011) observes ‘the putative distinctiveness of the EU in terms of ‘civilian’, ‘normative’, ‘structural’ ... is characterized as internal and too ‘sterile’ among the external perceptions scholars (Lucarelli 2007, 252; Larsen 2014, 901). He argues that the external perceptions findings are underestimated by the NPE scholars, however, they are useful for the conceptualization of the NPE, even ‘there is no in-depth treatment of how the external perceptions findings contribute’ to the normative power discussion in a broader sense (Larsen 2014, 901).

As it will be mentioned in external perceptions literature section, the EU is predominately seen as an economic leader. However, some findings could be helpful for the NPE discussion. Therefore, literature in the field of EU external perceptions surveys the images of the EU as a ‘Normative Power Europe’ (Chaban 2011; Holland & Chaban 2011; Chaban et al. 2013; Chaban et al. 2015; Chaban & Holland 2015). Recently, the NCRE launched a package of research projects dedicated to the exploration of the Normative Power Europe: EU international identity and foreign policy. For example, Chaban et al. (2013, 443), who summarized some of the Elgström/NCRE findings on elites’ interviews draw a conclusion that

A much smaller number of the interviewees characterized the EU as a political and sometimes normative leader through promoting human rights (South Asia), supporting democracy through conditionality (Pacific, Kenya) and crisis prevention (Africa).

The results of the EU’s normative influence in the GARNET project guided by Sonia Lucarelli are the following:

We could not find much evidence of the EU being widely seen as a ‘normative power’, exporting universal values of democracy and human rights. Equally surprisingly, the EU no longer seems to be regarded as a social model to be imitated [...] the external image of the EU is not one of great distinctiveness, except perhaps in a few areas such as [...] the EU model of regional integration. Elements of distinctiveness emerge also as far as the EU’s approach to crisis management is concerned. (Lucarelli, 2007, 269; Fioramonti and Lucarelli, 2010, 222)

Other important findings regarding NPE are provided by the study of PPMI, NRCE and NFG-Asian Perception of the EU in partnership with TNS Global conducted in 2015. This analytical report studied norm setting as one of the perceptions’ variables in 10 Strategic Partners of the EU. Despite the rich academic discourse, the EU is rarely seen as NPE. Thus, the results are formulated below:

The majority of analyzed data and key audiences are skeptical about the image of the EU as a norm setting entity across all thematic areas, with some specific exceptions in sustainable development, gay rights and renewable energy as highlighted by elite interviewees. With the emergence of the migration crisis, the EU is seen to act against its own standards. (Barcevičius et al., 2015, 33)

In addition, the findings of the research project based on exclusively media elites' interviews (considered being the most skeptical) in seven ASEAN countries linking NPE and 'cascading activation' framing theory are also valuable for normative power' discussions (Chaban and Holland, 2015). Japan (positive perception) and India (ambivalent) are the countries with a high intensity profile of the NPE while Singapore (positive), South Korea, China (neutral), Thailand and Indonesia (negative) demonstrated a low profile. To illustrate,

Not only did the intensity and evaluations differ between the locations, but the set of norms recognized as EU attributes also varied across locations. [...] peace, democracy, human rights, freedoms and sustainable development (in terms of environmental protection) were more frequently recognized by Asian journalists. The rule of law, social solidarity and regional governance received only limited attention, and the antidiscrimination norm was not recognized in any of the country cases. (idem, 294)

External recognition became a central concept in this study following Kavalski (2013) who suggests 'to be a normative power is often times less important than to appear to be a normative power' (Chaban and Holland 2015, 287). Another recent study has been conducted based on combination of external perceptions and the NPE approach about Israeli perceptions of the EU (Pardo, 2015). Author made a conclusion that Normative Power Europe perceived in Israel as negative 'Other' (ibid.).

Meanwhile, the analysis of the theoretical contribution from the external perceptions showed that normative power cannot be applied to the EU as the primary way of having an impact on the worldwide community (Larsen 2014, 906). Larsen insists perceptions on the EU as a Normative power seem more relevant for the EU-neighborhood: it is 'a debate by Europeans for a European audience' (Tocci 2008, 21 in ibid.). Thus, 'regional normative power' term should be more appropriate when applying to the EU (idem, 908). This claim is covered to some extent in the analysis section, discussion, in particular. However, for the NPE development, Larsen's suggestion is to search for the combination of the NPE perceptions and other sources of power in the countries where normative power perceptions are prominent (ibid.).

The fact that the EU acts on the international scene as if its external image corresponds to its self-perception can lead to a dangerous cognitive dissonance that will negatively affect its

relations with the outside world. Apparently, it is time for the EU to complete the stage of self-reflection and define its role as a global actor and pay more attention to the opinion of the other international actors. As Chaban and Holland noted (2015, 294), '[t]o claim normative power status without demonstrating normative power implementation is at best self-defeating, at worst corrosive'. As for the prospects of the NPE concept itself, it should be noted that, despite its contradictory nature and high degree of idealization of the proposed form of the EU power, this conceptual direction allowed a fresh look at the nature of the European Union and its role in world politics, reflecting such important aspects, as goal-setting and the essential foundations of the EU policies.

There is no doubt that given the changes taking place in world politics, this research direction is far from exhausted and in the near future there will be a lot of empirical and theoretical studies, the starting point for which could be the concept of the 'normative power' of the EU. In my thesis I argue that further research in this area requires a more flexible approach to the consideration of norms, as well as a critical reflection not only on real political practices, but also on the initial conceptual foundations of the idea of the 'normative power' of the EU using 'outside-in' perspective.

4. EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS: LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1. EU Global Perceptions

This chapter will provide the most important studies with some elaboration on the findings relevant to my study. First, I discuss input of the NCRE studies at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand in external perceptions research. Second, GARNET under the Framework of Excellence and Lucarelli's findings are presented. Third, I proceed with Elgström's findings on leadership and power in multilateral setting. Finally, findings from the other collaborated or individual projects/ articles will be reviewed. At the end of the chapter I summarize the findings of the previous studies.

During the past two decades, the EU external perceptions have been studied by three major independent, but often complementary projects. The first line of projects is represented by the National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE) at the University of Canterbury (NZ) and carried out under the supervision of Chaban and Holland. They mostly were focusing on the EU external perceptions in the Asia-Pacific countries and some mirror projects about Asian perceptions in the EU. Chaban and Holland are well-known for their multi-layered approach material gathering from 'elite' conducting semi-structured interviews, public opinion through the opinion polls (questionnaire) and mass media analysis (content analysis or framing mostly). Among NCRE projects are 'The EU in Asia Pacific Region' (2004-05), 'The EU's Outreach and Dialogue with New Zealand' (2000-ongoing), 'New Zealand Historical Perceptions of European Integrations' (2006-ongoing), 'The EU as a Development Actor Pacific' (2006-08), 'The European Union in the Eyes of Asia' (2006-11), 'Asia in the Eyes of the EU' (2009-11), 'After Lisbon: Images of the EU in the Asia-Pacific' (2011-12), 'External Images of the EU as a global energy actor' (2012-14), 'Normative Power Europe: EU international identity and foreign policy' (2014-17), 'Images of the EU in 10 EU Strategic Partners' (2015), 'EU in the Eyes of Taiwanese' (2016) and 'C3EU: EU perceptions in Ukraine and Israel/Palestine' (2015-18). Results of these projects are presented in the enormous number of books and scientific articles (see Chaban and Holland, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2015; Chaban et al., 2009; Holland and Chaban 2010, 2014; Chaban and Kelly, 2017). The full list of the publications can be found on the NCRE web page. In my study I do not investigate public perceptions in Kazakhstan therefore I will elaborate on media and elite interviews' findings to the greater extent.

Findings of the ‘Public, Elite and Media Perceptions of the EU in Asia-Pacific Region: Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Thailand: A Comparative Study’ reported in Chaban and Holland’s (2008) volume. Surprisingly, the mass media content analysis revealed more common than different perceptions of the EU formed in Asia and Pacific (ibid., 48). TV news and newspapers (data collected in 2004) in the countries mentioned earlier portrayed the EU in a predominately political frame focusing on individual Member States ‘often obscuring the EU as a whole’, while the economic frame was the next in line. At the same time, Asia-Pacific media did not pay that much attention to the ‘human face’, to clarify, social dimension of the EU (idem, 56). The EU’s enlargement was also another important issue analyzed in the book. Thus, ambivalence, confusion and contradictions have been noticed because ‘each positive metaphor was accompanied by a negative counterpart’ (idem, 84; 93-94). Public opinion showed higher level of awareness about the EU in Asia not in Pacific region and while in Asia people tend to focus on economic features of the EU and strategic partnership (idem., 127-138), Pacific perceptions are divided on ‘domestic/ threat concerns’ and ‘attitude to the EU as a political institution’ (idem., 119). The EU was seen as a reference point for ASEAN (idem, 138). Bruter (2008) evaluated *spontaneous images* amongst Asia-Pacific public and the positive perceptions of the EU prevailed with an exception of New Zealand. Dominant perceptions of the EU are ‘model of unity [...] has globally participated positively in the contemporary transformation of the international scene’, ‘euro’ and ‘Schengen’ (idem, 162). Political, business and media elite of the Asia-Pacific countries came to a consensus that the EU is less important player for the region than the US and Asian countries, however, many interviewees expressed their desire to see the EU overcoming the US’ hegemony (idem, 200). Again, the EU was seen by elites performing well economically ‘trade success’, while political (‘aspirant political actor’) and normative influence (in general and in environmental sphere) were discussed by interviewees occasionally (idem, 201).

Another pre-crisis volume is ‘The EU through the Eyes of Asia’ media, public and elite perceptions *in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand* (Holland et al., 2007). Such qualitative measures as *frames (political, economic, social actor)* and *evaluation (positive, neutral, negative)*, *focus on domesticity* and *degree of centrality* have been utilized for media analysis. *Spontaneous images* were applied in both public and stakeholders’ perceptions. Unsurprisingly, the EU is seen as an economic actor (46%) across all the countries in the majority of media outlets in 2006 (idem, 234). In the political frame the EU had being presented in the Asian media as an international political actor (38%) (idem, 231). Contrary to the

previously indicated two frames, the EU's descriptions as a social and environmental actor had remarkably lower visibility in the news – 14% and only 3% relatively (Chaban 2007, 257). Social frame had been covered in most cases neutrally across all 6 countries. Concerning the elite dataset, 154 interviews had been conducted. It is clear, that almost all interviews recognized the EU as a 'great economic power' except couple of interviewees who disregarded this image (Holland 2007, 243). What cannot be said about EU's political power perceptions: 'its political and military powers are questioned' (Hong Kong elite) or it 'lacks political power', the EU pictured as a 'broker' rather than a leader (Singapore's elite); the EU 'is a great power in terms of economy, diplomacy, and norms but that is not the case in political and military terms' (Korean elite) (ibid.). Chinese elite gave the most critical and accurate description of the EU saying that

To be a significant source of power and influence, but not necessarily as a leader in the global political arena. In this regard, the EU might be considered just one great power among many in the multi-polar world. (ibid.)

The most significant contribution of the volume is a proof that 'the EU is increasing being viewed as a more diverse and multi-faceted actor' (idem, 245).

Perceptions in other three Southeast Asian countries — Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines (Holland et al., 2009) contribute to the Asian perceptions of the EU. This time findings show that the EU seen not only as an economic player but as international political player too (in mass media) (Holland 2009, 133-134). The biggest concern was relatively low level of the EU visibility in these countries, especially on TV. Elites in Philippines saw the EU as a great power but from the different angles. EU's 'great power' understanding in Philippines went beyond economic dominance: 'more than economic power, it is this idea it has created a level of influence unmatched by the US' (Holland et al., 2009, 34-35). Integrative power was perceived as 'a counterbalance to the EU' and 'as means to funnel collective influence on policy decisions such as development aid' (ibid.). Regarding leadership capabilities, the EU has not been perceived as a 'global leader' rather it was seen as a leader in some 'segments' due to 'lack of singular voice' on the foreign policy matters (idem., 37-38). Nonetheless, the EU perceived as a normative leader in this location: 'leader in promotion of certain standards' (ibid.). In Vietnamese media (data collected in 2008) the image of the EU as 'an international actor performing mostly in Europe or around the world, but not interacting extensively with South East Asia in general' (idem, 71), to clarify it has a low level of 'domesticity'. While Vietnamese policy- and decision-makers believed that the EU's performance as an international leader

significantly increased, at the same time, 2/3 of stakeholders recognized the EU's global power in economic and diplomatic area (idem, 74). Indonesian elites perceived the EU as a global power even it is not the most important partner for Indonesia (idem, 116). European integration was the highest mentioned spontaneous image among the elite (idem, 117).

Some of the research has been dedicated to the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis and after-crisis period. 'Communicating in Times of Crisis' volume edited by Chaban and Holland (2014) is one of the valuable publications imposing new aspects of the EU perceptions. For example, in Asia-Pacific the EU seen 'as a major security actor in the ever more important area of non-traditional security threats, such as water and energy security, counterpiracy and disaster relief' (idem, 113). Assessing mass media perceptions in China, Japan and Russia in times of crisis, images of the 'pure EU' content attracted the wave of negative evaluations due to Eurozone crisis (idem, 133). Neutral portrayals were dominating, but negative assessments were more emphasized than positive ones (except in the Chinese case) (ibid.). EU's political actorness perceived almost indifferently in all three locations. China and Japan still pay more attention to the EU's economic aspect as a 'more capable' frame on its own continent, while for Russia prominently associates the EU with a 'social affairs dimension' (idem., 135). The EU news with 'local hooks' surprisingly had a low emotional charge in China, Japan and Russia (idem, 138). It should be noted that after the Eurozone crisis, public in 10 Asia-Pacific countries tend to see the EU even more ambivalent (idem, 165).

This volume also segregated perceptions of the EU in the neighborhood (Georgia, Israel, Ukraine, Turkey, Senegal and Morocco). Within the ENP there was acknowledgement of the EU identity and key roles affiliate to 'economic development, democratic norms and as a security actor', even though these features had contradictory elucidation (Holland & Chaban, 2014, 250). Overall, if Israeli perceptions were 'skeptical' about the EU's impact on Israel, Georgian perceptions put 'sobering' of the EU recognizing EU's attraction and 'being aware of the implied obstacles', and, finally, 'euphoric' perceptions of the EU as an example to follow (desire to migrate) seen in Senegal, Morocco, Turkey and Ukraine.

'Analysis of the perception of the EU and the EU's policies abroad' (2015) is another important and extremely large studies requested by the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) and consequently scrutinized by the Public Policy and Management Institute (PPMI, Lithuania), NCRE and the NFG Research Group. It provides an overview of

the EU external perceptions in 10 Strategic Partners (Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and the USA). Such policy areas as economy, trade, politics and security, development, migration and multiculturalism and human rights, environment and energy, research, science and technology, culture, education were analyzed in perceptions of different audiences (business, youth, academia/ think tanks, policy-makers, civil society, media and general public). Considering the structure of the research it consists of literature review of all the materials available on ten SP (2003-2015), public opinion survey, media content analysis, social media content analysis (analyzing Twitter as one of the EU external perceptions' component is unique), as well as elite and group interviews. *Visibility*, *actorness* and *effectiveness*, *norm setting* (nine-member paradigm 'NPE' see Manners, 2002) and *local resonance* measures as well as *emotive charge* were assessed in media analysis.

Recently, Chaban and Kelly (2017) examined such target domains as - *the EU as a great power*, *as an international leader*, *the EU's importance to the location in question*, *the EU enlargement and the euro*. According to the research,

target domains EU as a great power, EU as a leader and the euro attracted a large number of metaphorical categorizations whilst target domains EU enlargement and EU local importance were of a low intensity metaphorical response (idem, 697).

For instance, to the EU enlargement 'image of opportunity, rather than a threat' was assigned. The EU as a leader was characterized by army criterion: '...an EU together can raise a huge army and can defend itself or be aggressive' (Australian political elite, 2012) in (idem, 699). EU as a structure was seen as 'stable but there are cracks sometimes' (NZ businessperson, 2012) (ibid). Reflecting on the EU power and leadership, interviewees portrayed the EU as 'a COUNTERBALANCE to the US' which is sometimes effective and sometimes not (ibid). As a result, contradictory mapping was recognized in the metaphors the 'EU as an AGGRESSOR vs. VICTIM, as well as a WEAPON; or a DOCTOR vs. a SICK PERSON vs. a HEALTHY PERSON' (idem, 700). In comparison to 2005-2006 in both countries decline towards negative perceptions was noted.

Another two-phase research project, namely, the '*External Image of the European Union*' under the 'Network of Excellence of 'Global Seen from the Outside Governance, Regionalization and Regulation: The Role of the EU – GARNET' was directed by Lucarelli and by later joined Fioramonti and involved 26 researchers all over the globe. This study project covered the EU external perceptions in 16 extra-European countries and 7 international

organizations which are the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the World Bank (WB), the African Union (AU), the African Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) negotiating with the EU for the European Partnership Agreements (EPAs), Al Jazeera and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) taking part in world gatherings (Lucarelli, 2014). This study had a look on the EU and its actions from both sides: EU's self-representations and external perceptions. As NCRE projects, GARNET survey considered public opinion polls, political elites, mass media (the press) and organized civil society (analysis of the press and elite interviews). Unfortunately, since this project is one of a kind and there is lack of resources. Consequently, scholars had to rely on data that already existed: webpages, secondary literature, documents and reports, local and regional opinion polls and etc. Country-specific studies comparability became challenging even though scholars have tailored their studies to one specific standard, nonetheless, the survey provided very fruitful in-depth country-specific information. The findings of this project are presented in a variety of scientific papers (see Lucarelli, 2007; Lucarelli and Fioramonti, 2009; 2010; Lucarelli, 2014).

The choice of the countries becomes evident because all the participants of this global survey have different characteristics: various political regimes and political history, developing and developed countries (for example, Latin America (Brazil), Asia (India, China and Japan), Africa (South Africa and Egypt), Oceania (Australia) and North America (Canada)) (Lucarelli and Fioramonti, 2007, 326).

Thus, major findings of this research project are listed below:

- 'A less known and less debated actor for public opinion and the media' (in comparison with the US or in general there is not that many information available) (idem., 339-321);
- 'Not a world power for the public' (idem., 321-332);
- 'A strategic opportunity and a trade giant for the elites' (more association in developing countries which need investments) (idem., 332-333);
- 'A security seeker' (contribution to peace-building in India) (idem., 333-334);
- 'A supporter of multilateralism or at least multipolarism' (idem., 334-335);
- 'Model of regional integration' (idem., 335);
- 'A neoliberal actor abroad but a social model at home' (idem., 335-336);
- 'A protectionist actor' in politicians' opinion (idem., 336-337);
- 'The EU as a model of (global) environmental protection' (idem., 337);
- 'The EU as a (possible) counterbalance to US hegemony' (idem., 338).

In later studies (Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2010) data from individual actors' perception such as the US, China, Russia, Iran and Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Mexico was gathered and evaluated. The whole second part was directed on the EU image in such organizations as the African Union, the World Bank, the United Nations, African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) and Al Jazeera media representative. In comparison with the previous project, new findings were discovered. Meantime, the US political elite *did not see the EU as a well-knit important and united actor*, the opposite, it has been associated with a *bureaucratic machine* (Sperling 2010, 13-31). The lack of unity among European member states in international politics was also noticed by the UN. Sharon Pardo's research on the EU's Israeli perceptions showed that Israel sees cultural and political ties with Europe, however it does not observe the EU's actions facilitating the Middle East peace procedure (2010, 70 - 86). Among the other negative images about the EU are also Chinese (protectionist policies) and Russian perceptions ('potentially troubling issues' including the EU Eastern Partnership) (Morini et al. 2010, 32 - 51). African countries pay attention to 'inconsistencies and double standards' (Sicurelli 2010, 180 - 194).

Talking about positive images, research on Mexico, South Africa, Brazil and India underlined the EU role as the one of the economic leader in the world (Olivier and Fioramonti 2010, 105-119; Chanona 2010, 120-134). The Union was perceived as 'promoter of democracy', 'model for integration' and progressive in development (Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2010, 224).

This study declares that 'the world would like the EU to become more political and less obsessed with short-term economic gains' (idem, 225). Overall, this research project showed that there is a correlation between what the EU thinks about itself and how it wants to be seen outside of the borders and what the reality is.

The third large-scale project 'New Roles of the EU in International Politics' (see Elgström 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010; Kilian and Elgström 2010 as cited in Lucarelli 2014a, 4), managed by Elgström, focused on a very specific aspect of external perceptions: perceptions of the EU in multilateral negotiations. Elgström works with semi-structured interviews with representatives outside of Europe, sometimes conducting group interviews. His aim is usually to understand what roles non-European participants assign to the European Union.

One of Elgström's research interest was evaluation of the EU image portrayed by African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) during trade negotiations concerning the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) (Elgström 2008). The research design mainly consisted of

official material from the EU webpages, primarily speeches by relevant the EU Commissioners, and of web-based NGO material (idem, 2). Basically, when studying the discourses represented by elite and documents, Elgström detected two contradictory roles the EU associates with: an *angel* or as a *demon*. He also drew attention on whether the EU 'is seen as a homogeneous or a divided actor' (idem, 3).

According to the results, the *angel image* placed usually in the EU Commission opinion, where the EU is shown as 'a consistently benign partner, concerned with the well-being of the poorer countries' (idem, 4). 'Development and free trade' are presented as flattering notions, what can be explained by amending of economic situation through the economic integration and respectively diminishing poverty (ibid.). *Demon's image* of the EU was discovered in description of non-western NGO's representatives. The EU is seen as *neo-mercantilist union* with a goal to promote its export interests (idem, 5). Second, promotion of the angel image as the only right leads to loss of the trustworthy and credibility of the EU normative power among the developing countries (idem, 7).

All interviewees recognized the EU as a power due to the EU's size and economic potential in International trade negotiations (Elgström 2007, 955). Respondents also talked about the EU and the US sharing the power status (ibid.). Leadership was not mentioned in the data as the EU being a promoter of democracy through the economic instruments rather it was linked to the impression of *the Union putting pressure* on the other participants (ibid.). Regarding the third parameter, the EU was not seen as an example of ideal behavior in the WTO, otherwise it was seen as a double-standard player, as a 'force for liberalization in ... services, this is counterbalanced by what is perceived as self-interested behavior in other areas' (idem, 956). Finally, the fourth criterion was reflected in the opinion that the 'EU is seen as a single actor, acting with one voice' meaning that it is much more difficult to influence on the decision-making processes from the outside (ibid.).

According to Laatikainen and Smith (2006), being a power does not necessarily mean being a leader, what had been proved by Elgström's research. The interviews showed the division between those who claimed that the EU is a 'de facto leader' together with the US and those who gave a leader role to the EU 'sometimes' and 'in some areas' (Elgström 2007, 958). Thus, there are at least three areas such as inconsistency, lack of legitimacy and excessive co-ordination, which the EU should work on in order to strengthen its leadership position.

'EU Leadership in an Emerging New World Order' is an article dedicated to the performance of the EU in trade and climate change negotiations where the EU leadership is problematized and assessed during 1990s and 2000s. Despite participation of such valuable players as China, the US and Japan in post-Kyoto negotiations, the EU was perceived as *a coherent leader* (see Kilian and Elgström 2010). However, there were disagreements about credibility perceptions. For instance, some developing states representatives mentioned the gap between the EU's words and deeds and only China considered the EU 'lost standing in global climate change politics' (Elgström 2010, 313). According to the interviews, all three types of leadership (structural, instrumental and directional) were indicated but there is some work to be done to embody structural potential through the instrumental leadership.

In trade negotiations, the EU was described as a great power mostly due to the size of the EU and GNP and it was named as 'crucial and pivotal' and a 'key player' (see Elgström 2007). There was found a link between the potential of the EU and expectations of the others on that. Sometimes the EU was portrayed as not credible enough and was accused in leadership with *double standards* (free trade but not in the agricultural sector) (Elgström 2011, 314).

The Copenhagen climate summit in 2009 had thrown back the EU from the leaders' position in climate change negotiations. Why did it happen or was the EU a leader? Firstly, the EU was perceived as an 'incoherent, internally divided actor without a strong spokesperson' (Curtin 2010 in Elgström 2010, 315). Second reason is that the EU's promises were weaker and less ambitious than those which other Western countries presented. Finally, the EU is a 'relatively minor power in terms of global emissions' which of course put limitations on the structural leadership capacity (Curtin 2010 in Elgström 2010, 315).

In Elgström's opinion, the EU will still stay one of the leaders in trade issues due to the substantial structural leadership potential, meanwhile, there is an opportunity to seek for joint cooperation with the US.

The EU was pictured as a 'restricted leader' in multilateral negotiation, namely, WTO, UNFF, CITIES (Elgström 2006, 16). Thus, in the UNFF the EU was perceived as a 'structurally driven great power', but observers didn't assign the role of a leader (idem, 20). Despite the EU tried to show the viability of integrational project and as a result, many EU-countries presenting one point of view in the CITES, the EU could not offer a 'clear and consistent policy line', that is why the role of a leader could not be assigned (idem, 22). Non-EU observers in the WTO

designated the role of a leader to the EU, nonetheless, it is a ‘challenged, problematic and restricted leadership’ (idem, 24).

Last but not least, *common research projects* indicated here. One of the NCRE and Lund University projects ‘Images of the EU beyond its Borders: Issue-Specific and Regional Perceptions of European Union Power and Leadership’ was directed to show that the EU perceptions are not only about assessment if it is a leader/ great power or not. Scholars claim ‘perceptual patterns are actually more nuanced and complex, and images of the EU vary depending on the issue at hand and across regions’ (Chaban et al. 2013, 433).

This paper peruses perceptions of EU power and leadership in three regions: the Pacific (Papua New Guinea, Fiji and wider Pacific), Southeast Asia (Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia) and Africa (Kenya and South Africa) (idem, 434); and it covers five areas: security, diplomatic, commercial, development and normative issues (idem, 435). This research is based on a comparative survey of images among 274 national ‘elites’: political, business, civil society and media representatives.

This is one of the articles where a distinction between *exogenous* and *endogenous* factors shaping the EU external perceptions is made (idem, 447). According to Tsuruoka (2008, 3), *exogenous* factors represent ‘the EU’s actual actions within and outside its borders’ and *endogenous* ‘unrelated to what the EU is doing in its own territory and in the world’.

The findings were the following. Interestingly, the EU’s *lack of unity was not observed* in the *Pacific*: alternately, the Union is invisible in comparison to the intensive presence of Australia and the US. The EU was perceived as a leader by the 60-80 % of the Pacific and Kenya respondents, whilst same figures in Southeast Asia and South Africa are in the diapason of 50 and 70 %. Nonetheless, leadership qualities in the economic, commercial and development assistance spheres are top-rated. On the contrary, only some of interviewees defined the EU as a political and normative leader achieving that through human rights promotion (Southeast Asia), ‘supporting democracy through conditionality (the Pacific and Kenia) and crisis prevention (Africa). Leadership in security and environmental issues was rarely mentioned. In Southeast Asia the EU was portrayed as ‘a broker rather than a leader in world diplomacy’ what leads to a reasonable description of the EU as ‘soft power’. (idem, 442)

Regarding power perceptions, the majority of interviewees saw the EU as a great power, but mostly in economic affairs. In Pacific region between 40 and 60 % ultimately perceived the

EU as a great power while in Southeast Asia and Asia number barely reach 40 percent (between 10 - 40 %). 20 % in South Africa and approximately 30 % in Southeast Asia did not perceive the EU as a great power at all (idem., 455). The EU was defined as ‘*not* military power’, but definitely as a ‘‘developmental’ global power’ (ibid.).

The research was hypothesis-testing based and empirically justified (idem, 481). The findings of the joint project were the following. The EU as a political actor was seen as an ‘underperforming’ regional player in the Ukrainian conflict and other internal issues, for example, a ‘threat of Grexit’, Brexit. Economic character of the EU was ambivalent. In 2011, news about the EU in the energy field covered diversification of gas-supply routes, though the EU was illustrated as an ‘equal and important business partner’ (Chaban et al. 2017, 489-490). Emotive charge showed that the EU has been presented in Russian media neutrally both in 2011 and 2015.

Chaban and Elgström (2014) addressed the gap of literature’s scarcity on the topic of dyadic EU images in Emerging Powers’ media discourses in daily newspapers (three newspapers per country including one daily in English), namely in China, India and Russia. Comparative research on the ‘great powers’ presented is unique, especially talking about ‘undisputable super power’ – the US and other assumed ‘great powers’ mentioned earlier (idem.,171). They insist that research of ‘domestic media about powerful ‘Others’ is critical to understanding international relations and national policy choices’ (ibid.). As this study was hypotheses-based, it was organized in terms of *volume*, *evaluation*, *intensity* and *issue coverage*. Thus, Russian, Indian and Chinese media does not pay substantial attention to the EU-Russia, EU-India and EU-China relations whilst the EU’s relations with the US characterized as a ‘tandem of Western Powers’ (idem, 184). ‘Domestication’ of news and focus of all the states media on its own country’s collaboration with the EU was seen (ibid). Not surprisingly, the EU was not the central actor in most of the sample and perception of leader was almost absent (idem, 185). Hypotheses on EU perception as ‘power in decline’, neutral assessment of the EU actions and EU image as economic actor primarily were proved (ibid). Henceforward, contribution of the study to the external perceptions field is hard to underestimate.

Some of the conclusion should be formulated from the literature overview. Firstly, research on the EU perceptions among public has showed little awareness/knowledge of the EU. The EU is more visible in its neighborhood rather in Asia-Pacific or in some other distanced location (see Chaban et al. 2013, 440). Secondly, media is mostly focused on the EU external relations

rather than internal affairs. Thirdly, EU images among elites and media relate to the economic criteria and the EU is almost never seen as a norm-setter/promoter except the EaP region with rare exceptions. Finally, the most important finding was about a huge ‘gap between potential and actual leadership [...] perceived [...] by [...] the elites and the public’ (Lucarelli 2014a, 8).

The tendency is not optimistic: some of the elites may perceive the EU as *a power at the moment*, but *not to label* it with *leadership capabilities*. There is appreciation and respect towards the EU, however, there is lack of confidence in the ability of the Union to transform its potential into actual leadership. Perceptions of the EU in multi-lateral negotiations with less developed countries regarding partnership were blamed as built on the false premises. Even the EU is criticized for being internally divided, in some negotiations it is observed as a consolidated player (Lucarelli 2014a, 11).

Clearly, EU external perceptions have been studied not all over the globe and Central Asia region was left on the margins without attention, whereas perceptions in Asia-Pacific and Russia, Israel, Canada, for instance, have been studied in different projects even more than twice. Indisputably, Asia-Pacific perceptions cumulated the richest data, while American and African studies are still under-explored. Besides, there is lack of state-of-the-art empirical body of research what forces scholars to refer to old and in the worst case not relevant data anymore.

4.2. Kazakhstani Perceptions of the EU

The EU-Central Asia relations research covers mainly such topics as conflict of great powers’ interests in Central Asia and EU’s role in those processes and geopolitical concerns (Meister, 2009; Cameron, 2009; Kavalski, 2010; Warkotsch, 2011; Kavalski, 2012; Mori, 2016), application of the EU Strategy for Central Asia (Kassenova, 2008; Melvin, 2008; Emerson and Boonstra, 2010; Pirro, 2013), the EU’s promotion of democracy, human rights and rule of law in the region (Crawford, 2008; Hoffmann, 2010; Axyonova, 2011; Dave, 2008; Axyonova 2014) and some of the research is aimed to explain the EU’s role in Central Asia and the challenges for European policy in the region (Melvin, 2007; De Pedro, 2009; Demirtag, 2009; Peyrouse, 2017). For example, Peyrouse (2017) concluded that the EU is a ‘donor without influence’ in Central Asia and that the EU should ‘making better use of its prestige in Central Asia, which admires its culture, education, know-how, and quality of life’ if it wants to have any means of influence in the region (2017, 5).

Regarding research on the European Union-Kazakhstani relations, some works are dedicated to bilateral collaboration and its transformation from cooperation strategy to the advanced partnership (Boonstra & Tsertsvadze, 2013; Kurmanguzhin, 2016), security cooperation (Baizakova, 2013), balancing between economics and enhancement of democracy in Kazakhstan (Anceschi, 2014), energy policy and sustainable development (Collins and Bekenova, 2017; Chukayeva and Akzharov, 2016). It is necessary to mention an essay of Meruert Makhmutova (2016) where she gives recommendations for the EU behavior in Kazakhstan taking into account recent changes namely economic slowdown of the state due to participation in Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union. According to scholar's opinion, the EU should 'support and promote rule of law', take 'the role of an external balancer to China and Russia's competition for power' in the country and Central Asia region (ibid.). Konopelko (2017, 14) suggests enhancing the EU-Kazakhstan cooperation in people-to-people contacts through civil society organizations (students, academics, NGOs, business chambers); promotion of democracy could serve the main tool of the new EU strategy towards Central Asia.

Clearly, the EU perceptions in Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan, have been left without any worthy attention. Research on how the EU is perceived in Kazakhstan is just emerging. There are only a few studies assessing elites and media perception of the EU. Bossyut tried to challenge the existing frames about the EU and stated that 'the EU is perceived as a more neutral and benevolent player' in Central Asia (Bossyut 2010, 205). It was the first attempt to evaluate the EU's position through the prism of the interviews with government officials (idem, 20). Chernykh (2011), Kazakh scholar, based her research on a public opinion poll held in 2010 and assessed public perception of the actors present in Kazakhstan. One of the recent papers is about how politicians, business leaders, scholars and civil society experts from Central Asia view the EU and its approach to the region based on the interviews with experts (Peyrouse, 2014). For instance, the EU is perceived as having 'substantial economic leverage, but barely any political weight' in comparison to Russia, the US or China in Kazakhstan what partially echoes with the results of Elgström's research on the EU's roles (idem, 7).

However, recently there were published two articles on Kazakhstani perceptions of the EU, namely 'Mass Media Perception of the European Union in Kazakhstan' (Ospanova, et al. 2016) and 'Assessing EU perception in Kazakhstan's mass media' (Ospanova et al. 2017). Both articles complement each other and both are based on the same data.

‘Mass Media Perception of the European Union in Kazakhstan’ illustrates multi-leveled research with the first step as a usage of content analysis for analysis of mass media publications and discourse analysis for the next step to identify specific features of the articles/interviews authored by the EU and Kazakhstani elites (Ospanova et al. 2016). Thus, “Yegemen Kazakhstan” and “Kazakhstanskaya Pravda” governmental newspapers and “Zhas Alash” and “Vremya” opposition newspapers respectively were chosen. Authors decided to collect data during three periods explaining that by changing policy of the EU towards Central Asia: 1992-1994, 2006-2008 and 2011-2013. Materials were categorized by several criteria. Firstly, data was sorted on news and periodical articles what means classification by type. Secondly, publications were divided into three categories of negative, neutral and positive, based on general message and connotation. Thirdly, there was breakdown by topics: the EU Politics, EU Economics and EU-Kazakhstan/Central Asia dimension.

The results of the content analysis showed that governmental newspapers used to publish more on the EU related topics rather than opposition newspapers and news are mostly neutral and positive. In addition, there is a tendency of steadily growth of the focus on the EU related issues. Overall, Kazakh mass media contributes to the development of positive EU perception in the country.

Discourse analysis revealed various images portrayed by the EU and Kazakh elites. For example, Kazakhstani officials perceived the EU as a ‘trade and investments partner’, but ‘dependent on import of energy sources’ and experienced in ‘development of social policy’ (idem, 89). While, the EU elites see the Union experienced in ‘providing peace’, EU policy-making based on its ‘values’, ‘the EU is an expert, not a model’ willing to ‘share its experience in various areas’ (ibid.). Kazakhstan separates itself from the Central Asia region, when the EU does not treat Kazakhstan as a ‘privileged country’ (idem, 88). There is a trend of the trade development, however, the interpretation of the sides differs. In my humble opinion, the research is not transparent enough.

‘Assessing EU perception in Kazakhstan’s mass media’ works with the same data, however it explains the methodological choice better than previous one and literature review is connected to the notion of power (Ospanova et al. 2017). Nonetheless, there is a missing link between the research and ‘normative power’ presented in detail in the literature review. In comparison to the other publication, this paper presents more detailed information about the results. The

authors take Holland and Chaban's (2008) as well as Kaveshnikov's (2007) approaches for analyzing mass media's sources about the EU (idem, 73).

There is a change in the content of the articles between 2006-2008 and 2011-2013. For instance, lack of the EU formal description was found in 2011-2013 timeframe (idem, 78). Also, recently news/ publications about the Union were focused on the internal issues with a slightly negative connotation as 'economic problems generated by the Eurozone crisis, member states lack solidarity to tackle the root causes of the problems' (ibid.). There are worries about the impact of the EU economic crisis on the global economy as well. Discourse analysis part duplicates the findings of the previous research.

Overall results of this study corroborated previous findings that the economic power of the EU significantly influences its perception outside of the borders. Kazakhstan's media portrayed the Union as an important economic player together with the triangle Russia-China-the US, and treats it as a valuable partner of Central Asian region. The analysis also showed that the EU suffers from 'communication deficit' (Holland and Chaban 2008, 2) in Kazakhstan. In spite of Kazakh media content on the EU and EU-Central Asia relations, the Union is pictured from the one side and dominated by the Kazakhstani elites' perception. The failure of the EU's communication is evident due to its absence of the values and policy promotion to the foreign public (idem, 81).

Generally, perceptions of the EU in Kazakhstan are under-researched. In addition, there is no systematic and up-to-date research that would consider changes within the EU (Brexit, migrant crisis and etc.) and EU-Kazakhstan/CA relations (EPCA in 2015 and creation of the EU New Strategy for Central Asia).

5. METHODOLOGY

The following chapter is devoted to the elaboration on data collection and method of data analysis applied for the current study. According to the EU external perceptions studies, interviews with elite representatives and media analysis are the most traditional and explorative methods of research. Therefore, the structure of the methodological chapter is the following. The first section elaborates on the mass media data collection process. The second sub-chapter proceeds with the interviews data gathering. The third sub-chapter is devoted to the explanation of content-analysis where I argue why exactly this method has been chosen. The fourth and the fifth part elaborate on methods' applicability for media and interviews' analyses in depth.

5.1. Data Collection

5.1.1. *Mass Media*

The first part of my data comprises mass media materials. I have collected them from two media sources in Kazakhstani media: Kazakhstanskaya Pravda (KazPravda) newspaper and Tengrinews portal. I chose these two sources, first, due their circulation, and second, because they are popular among elites and significant part of the society.

I planned to collect data from a pro-governmental newspaper (KazPravda), one independent source (Vlast.kz) and/ or opposition newspaper (Vremya). However, after a preliminary investigation of Kazakhstani mass media, it was noticed that the analysis of the so-called opposition newspaper used in previous studies would not make any sense since it contains very few materials on the EU. Also, as my media research is time-specific and covers a three-year period from January 1st, 2015 till December 31st, 2017, Vlast.kz and Vremya newspaper would not respond these requirements due to the absence of the news articles in the archives. Therefore, I decided to omit them from my data collected. Moreover, Tengrinews portal was mentioned by the interviewees as the most reliable news portal in Kazakhstan.

Currently, the circulation of the nationwide daily newspaper "Kazakhstanskaya Pravda" exceeds 100, 000 copies. It is the main source of official and business information. The government-backed newspaper is distributed to all regions of the country.'Kazpravda' covers such topics as politics, economy, society, incidents, technology, culture, sport and world news. The circle of its readers is wide: from pensioners and housewives to politicians and diplomats.

The electronic version, published in two languages - Russian and English, has regular readers in almost one hundred countries of the world.

Tengrinews.kz is a Kazakhstani online publication and information portal, founded on November 15, 2010 in Almaty. It is the largest information portal in Kazakhstan and it is part of the media holding company Alash Media Group. Topics covered are Kazakhstani news and world news, economy, technologies, culture and incidents. The web portal is available in two languages – Russian and Kazakh. It positions itself as a governmentally neutral source, however, there is almost no independent media in Kazakhstan and censorship is applied to some extent (see Freedom House, 2017). Tengrinews portal was mentioned by the interviewees as a reliable news portal in Kazakhstan.

I analyzed Russian language versions of the both media sources. These mass media were monitored on the daily basis, using e-search. Key search terms for data collection of the EU related articles in mass media sources were ‘The European Union’, ‘The European Commission’, ‘European Parliament’, ‘European Court of Justice’, ‘European Central Bank’, ‘European Presidency’, ‘Council of the European Union’, ‘Eurozone’ and ‘Euro’ (their variations and acronyms in Russian). Also, it was practical to search for the term ‘Europe’ because the terms EU and Europe are often used interchangeably (see in Barcevičius et al., 2015; Chaban et al., 2017) in media sources.

Only relevant news articles and opinion papers were gathered. Overall, 86 articles were analyzed, where 46 retrieved from Kazpravda newspaper and 40 from Tengrinews portal. Criteria for choosing the articles were simple: they should have satisfied the general requirement of the EU being a central actor or one of the main participants of the reportage. In addition, to identify the patterns of EU’s representation in the media message, the articles in length should have been no less than half a page when copied into Microsoft Word document.

5.1.2. Interviews

Interviewing is a well-established technique in social sciences for gathering and the analysis of data. According to Schostak (2006, 54) an interview is an expansible process of communication, discussion between people which is aiming at retrieving an ‘in-depth information’ about a certain case or topic, and which helps to interpret a phenomenon in terms of what meanings interviewees assign to it.

To evaluate the EU perception among the elites of Kazakhstani society, the method of semi-structured (sometimes called moderately-scheduled) in-depth interviews for data gathering via Skype was chosen. Considering the fact that experts were also interviewed, it is useful to support this choice because experts could be referred as ‘intellectual’ elite of the society (see Chaban and Holland 2008, 183). Overall, I refer to all the interviewees with the term ‘elites’ who are individuals

gained their knowledge by virtue of their position and experience in the community, their established networks of relationships, their ability to express themselves orally, and their broad understanding of their community (Schensul et al. 1999, 84 in Chaban et al, 2013, 435).

Interviews are usually divided into structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Semi-structured interviews are recognized as the most common way to apply in IR scholarship. It operates with some flexibility in comparison to the structured interview, nonetheless, it also requires significant preparation before conducting the interview (see Lamont 2015, 83-85). The semi-structured interview ‘allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee’s responses’ (Rubin and Rubin 2005, 88). However, Berg (2007, 39) recommends using a ‘checklist’ that would cover all research questions because it ‘allows for in-depth probing while permitting the interviewer to keep the interview within the parameters traced out by the aim of the study’. Thus, a questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was based on the literature review and theoretical considerations, nevertheless, it gives some freedom to the interviewees for bringing new points since the topic of the EU perception in Kazakhstan is understudied and data-driven insights would not harm.

To conduct face-to-face interviews was not an option due to several reasons. First, it would demand significant expenses and time constraints. Second, there were some risks that several respondents would not be able to participate in the process. Therefore, Skype interviews as an alternate form of personal communication has been selected. Certainly, a researcher faces some negative and positive sides while conducting Skype-interviews. Positive sides include ability to see the reaction of the interviewee and possibility to ask for the clarification of the response in comparison to communication through the email. Among negative sides I have faced with were time differences and problems with the internet connection or technologies.

Approaching the elites of Kazakhstani society was exciting and challenging at the same time. The most difficult point was in the very beginning when I tried to identify potential interviewees. Therefore, I observed relevant internet space, websites of the organizations and

social media about possible speakers presenting NGOs, mass media, academia and think tanks, business and political cohort. In the field of my attention were both governmental and private organizations. The criteria for selecting the interviewees were the following. They are representatives from different layers of the elite in Kazakhstan. They are either academia or think tank experts in the field of Kazakhstani foreign policy and/ or EU/ Europe, representatives of the business elite whose companies are dealing with the EU countries, representatives from NGOs and governmental experts who deal with topics related to the EU (human rights, democratization and etc.), or representatives from the media such as journalists and editors-in-chief of popular news portals/ journals and newspapers who are aware of the topics dedicated to Europe and who create the content on the EU-Kazakhstan relations/ EU-related issues or Kazakhstan foreign policy. In addition, all of them by nature of their professional belonging, have travelled to European countries: some of them were even involved in some projects related to the EU Commission, EU mass media and EU companies.

In total, I contacted 45 people. From 16 I received a positive reply and therefore, 16 interviews were conducted during October-December 2017. While searching for the elites' representatives I was holding in mind that I want to keep a balance between cohorts. Among those 16 interviewees six are Academia and Think Tanks experts, four are media elite representatives, three are NGOs' representatives, and two are business elites and one is expert working for the government (Appendix 1). Unfortunately, it was difficult to find access to the representatives of the political elite, thus no interviews with political elite representatives has been organized.

The interviews lasted approximately from 30 to 60 minutes. All interviews were recorded and the interviewees gave their consent our conversations being recorded. Later, audio data were transcribed and translated from Russian to English where needed.

Even if the number of interviews is rather limited, it provides enough of data for qualitative analysis, in particular when combined with the analysis of mass media materials.

5.2. Content-analysis as the Method of Analysis

The choice of the content-analysis could be justified by the theoretical knowledge that perceptions cause categorization: 'When we perceive our environment, we rapidly integrate large amounts of incoming stimulus information into categories that help to guide our understanding of the world' (Brosch et al. 2010, 377 cited in Chaban and Holland 2014, 10). It means that categorization as a cognitive process is a 'fundamental aspect... of perception'

(ibid.). People have no other choice as to categorize information in order to process it and not to overload that cognitive capacity human beings have.

I chose qualitative content analysis (QCA) as a method of analysis for my thesis because it is systematic, reduces data and it is flexible to a certain degree. QCA is flexible in the way that researcher has the opportunity to adjust coding frame to his/her material (Boyatzis, 1998; Rustemeyer, 1992 in Schreier 2012, 7). Regarding systematic nature of content analysis, scholars as Holsti (1969), Krippendorff (1980) and Mayring (2010) recognized it as a distinctive feature from other research methods (see more in Schreier 2012).

One of the crucial steps of content analysis is creation of coding frame. Coding frame consists of main categories and subcategories, where categories are called 'dimensions'... 'the aspects on which you want to focus your analysis' and 'subcategories specify what is said about the aspects that interest you' (Schreier 2012, 59). Even Krippendorff (1980, 76) mentioned that defining categories is a hardworking process: 'How categories are defined ... is an art. Little is written about it'.

According to Schreier (2012, 84), there are three ways of doing QCA, namely, concept-driven strategy, data-driven strategy and combination of both ways. By the concept-driven way is meant a deductive strategy based on the knowledge you already have about your topic: knowledge retrieved from a theory, from prior research, daily experience or logic and this type is mostly inherent for quantitative content analysis (idem, 85). While data-driven strategy is inductive and let us to create coding frame from the collected data which is more quality-oriented (ibid, 87). Finally, the most common way is doing 'mixed' QCA, combining concept-driven and data-driven strategy (see Fruh, 2007 in idem, 89). It is very rare when QCA is purely concept-driven or data-driven method because utilizing only one of the strategy limits research not necessarily in a positive direction. Combined QCA can be done not only in a way that categories are concept-driven and subcategories are data driven but also a researcher can mix concept-driven and data-driven both main categories and subcategories.

In this paper, I apply combined strategy where main categories are based on inductive coding (data-driven strategy) while sub-categories are derived deductively from theory and logic (concept-driven). Below, I elaborate on content analysis of the media articles and interviews in details.

5.2.1. Mass Media Analysis

The content analysis was done mechanically by highlighting the most significant parts of the media messages focusing on the topic and emotive charge/ general connotation with the addition of the information about normative setting. To visualize the material and to be able to do content analysis with basic quantification, media articles and categories together with sub-categories were placed in the Microsoft Excel table. It worth mentioning, mass media analysis was encouraged by Chaban and Holland (2008) and Ospanova et.al. (2016).

Theme-based content analysis was utilized for the media analysis, where themes are the main categories. This classification includes division on the following topics: *the EU-Kazakhstan/ Central Asia relations, EU security, EU internal politics, EU external politics, EU economy and EU migration policy*. Therefore, sub-categories represent the focus on the nature of the media messages, their emotive charge, and connotation if available: *positive, neutral* and/ or *negative*. Another sub-category presents *norm-setting* which stands for *normative messages* with a reference to the Normative Power Europe (NPE) concept under the certain topics. Then, media messages in terms of normativity were divided on tertiary categories: *norms approved* or have a potential to be approved, including visibility of the EU acting in accordance with its norms and values, and *norms criticized* or have a potential to be rejected, including the visibility of the EU acting against proclaimed norms and values (what means the EU is not perceived as a norm-setter).

This coding frame has a medium complexity (see Schreier 2012, 71). First breakdown on topics has been made, therefore to show quantitative characteristics, breakdown on media sources has been emphasized. Here, one media article stands for one unit of analysis for the coding frame. The strategy of summarizing developed by Mayring (2010) has been chosen for main categories' development (Schreier 2012, 88). Created coding scheme satisfies the criterion of exhaustiveness emphasized by Schreier (idem, 77) meaning that each unit of coding was assigned to the coding scheme at least once. Also, I have reached the saturation point when there is no need to add more categories (idem, 91). Usually, categories are the dimensions, however, in my case, sub-categories are the dimensions which should be mutually exclusive. Thus, '*norm-setting*' captures different aspect of the material in comparison to the '*connotation*' of the media message, where '*negatively assessed*' could be easily distinguished from '*positively assessed*'.

Table 1. Coding frame of the mass media analysis

❖ EU- Kazakhstan/ Central Asia relations	
➤ Emotive Charge/ Connotation	
▪ Positive	
▪ Neutral	
❖ EU Security	
➤ Emotive Charge/ Connotation	
▪ Neutral	
▪ Negative	
❖ EU Internal Politics	
➤ Emotive Charge/ Connotation	
▪ Neutral	
▪ Negative	
❖ EU External Politics	
➤ Emotive Charge/ Connotation	
▪ Neutral	
▪ Negative	
❖ EU Economy	
➤ Emotive Charge/ Connotation	
▪ Neutral	
▪ Negative	
❖ EU Migration Policy	
➤ Emotive Charge/ Connotation	
▪ Positive	
▪ Neutral	
▪ Negative	
	➡ Norm-setting (Support/ Criticism)

I admit, to achieve unidimensional categories is quite a struggle for qualitative researchers. That's why overlaps to a certain degree could happen even during the main phase of analysis. Decision rules for the main categories were the following. *The EU-Kazakhstan/ Central Asia (CA) relations category* was assigned to the units where the main focus of the activity was cooperation of any kind between the EU and Kazakhstan/ CA. *The EU security category* was applied for the articles dedicated to the issues of the internal security, its drawbacks and ways of its strengthening. *The EU internal politics* was applied if some domestic issues were discussed including the EU as an integration. *The EU external politics* category was assigned if there are discussions on international actions of the EU and relations with other international actors. *The EU economy* theme was brought up if the EU-related publications covered financial features and aspects affecting the EU's welfare. *The EU migration policy* category represents disputes and coordination of the migration policy and multiculturalism in Europe.

Talking about the emotive charge/ connotation of the media messages, I should admit that quite rare one can find purely negative, neutral or purely positive publication. Therefore, decision rules were the following. For instance, if the article contains approximately 2/3 of the material expressed negatively it goes to sub-category negative. If both, positive and negative

characteristics are present equally, then it relates to the neutral category. Also, neutrally assessed sub-category mostly consist of news articles and mostly represents neutral emotive charge of the EU activities. When positive aspects are emphasized, then it fits under positive sub-category.

5.2.2. Interview Analysis

To ensure that no information pieces would be missing, I transcribed the tape-recorded interviews. Also, one should take into consideration that interviews material varies from mass media information, which is why coding process differed a little. In addition, it is necessary to mention that interviews are ambivalent by their nature.

Following to the one of the rules of content analysis, all material has been read in detail. Therefore, I broke down interviews' data according to the 'thematic criterion' (Schreier 2012, 136-138). Analyzing material, the combination of data-driven strategy and concept-driven way was applied to the coding frame. It should be noted, that I made two types of coding frames.

I analyzed interviews transcripts highlighting the most relevant parts in Microsoft Word and assigning numbers. After that step, I realized that some categories already could be defined because they appeared often following progressive summarizing strategy proposed by Mayring (2010) (Schreier 2012, 87-88). Next, I decided to assign names and numbers for the units. For example, the code NGO1.4.1 stood for the first (1) interviewee, NGO's representative opinion concerning economy (4) and its positive connotation (1). Then, I continued with subsuming strategy which means adding new category if the piece of the material presents new information which is not covered yet (idem, 115-118). The first coding frame had a basic complexity it had some drawbacks and it would be difficult to compare this coding scheme with the media analysis. The second coding scheme illustrated below (table 2).

Due to recommendations on the probe coding of the material to increase consistency and *reliability* (having trial coding and then main phase of analysis) after a break of couple weeks long, I have started dividing interviews' material from the very beginning. I was reviewing transcripts and was segmenting units of analysis in Microsoft Word document with the different font colors and assigning theme of the coding unit together with the characteristics of the message whether it was positive or negative. In interviews there was no neutral category because the interviewees presented their opinion with a certain emotion and it was rather clear.

When there was a change of subject/ topic or connotation, it was a sign of the ‘*coding unit*’ being ended. Some of the units were even not continuous and material in between was taking out (see Schreier 2012, 144). I revised this coding frame twice.

Table 2. Coding frame of the interview analysis

EU-Kazakhstan relations		EU Internal Politics		EU External Politics		EU Economy	
Norm-setting	Connotation (evaluation)	Norm-setting	Connotation (evaluation)	Norm-setting	Connotation (evaluation)	Norm-setting	Connotation (evaluation)
- Support	- Positive	- Support	-Positive	- Support	- Positive	- Support	- Positive
- Criticism	- Negative	- Criticism	-Negative	- Criticism	- Negative	- Criticism	- Negative

According to Schreier (2012, 95), it is important to define categories in order to let readers know what is meant by a certain category. Thus, I introduce the coding scheme of medium complexity and its description with the decision rules where needed. To start with, I conduct qualitative content analysis based on themes, and after that I analyze the normative power argument based on the analyses of all these themes. First, the main categories are *the EU-Kazakhstan relations*, *EU internal politics*, *EU external politics* and *EU economy*. *EU-Kazakhstan relations* category covers all issues relevant to my research questions in terms of EU-Kazakhstan cooperation. *The EU internal politics* category presents domestic issues, including integration-related processes within the union. While *the EU external politics* covers mostly foreign policy and focuses on the EU’s activity and input into global politics. *The EU economy* consists from codes dedicated to the EU’s economic situation, technologies and welfare.

Sub-categories are built on the principle of unidimensional categorization (Schreier 2012, 71-76) and assigned for every broader category, namely, *norm-setting* and *connotation/ evaluation* (the nature of the phrase and its interpretation). *Norm-setting* sub-category means coverage of the EU’s norms and values according to NPE literature. Norms-setting is divided on *norms supported* or have a potential to be approved, including visibility of the EU acting in accordance with its norms and values, and *norms criticized* or have a potential to be rejected, including the

visibility of the EU acting against proclaimed norms and values (what means the EU is not perceived as a norm-setter). *Connotation/ evaluation* is assessed through the *positive* and *negative* sides mentioned by the interviewees. There are some overlaps mostly not within one category but between two main categories. To illustrate, expressions about technologies transfer from the EU to Kazakhstan in the context of norm-setting could be an example of norm-setting in the EU-Kazakhstan relations and the EU economy too. Nonetheless, such expressions were placed under the EU-Kazakhstan relations due to unit of the context which is the 'portion of the surrounding material that you need to understand the meaning of a given unit of coding' (Schreier 2012, 133). Also, categories should be mutually exclusive and they are mutually exclusive but to a certain degree because in reality the main themes (categories) are closely related to each other and one has to allow that. Thus, to keep in mind, the EU internal politics affects EU external politics, EU economy affects EU politics and vice versa.

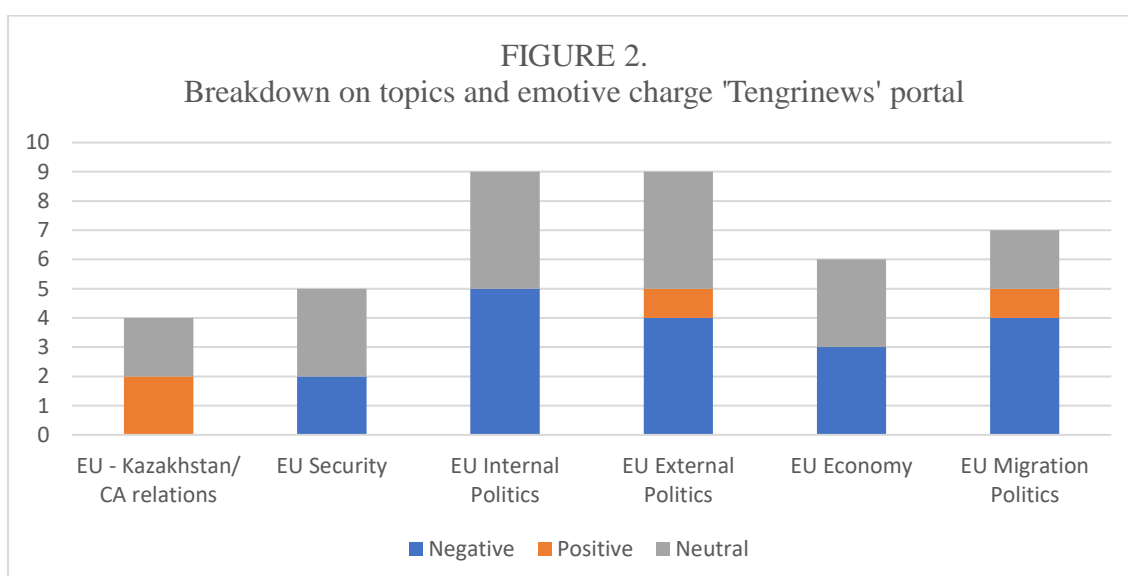
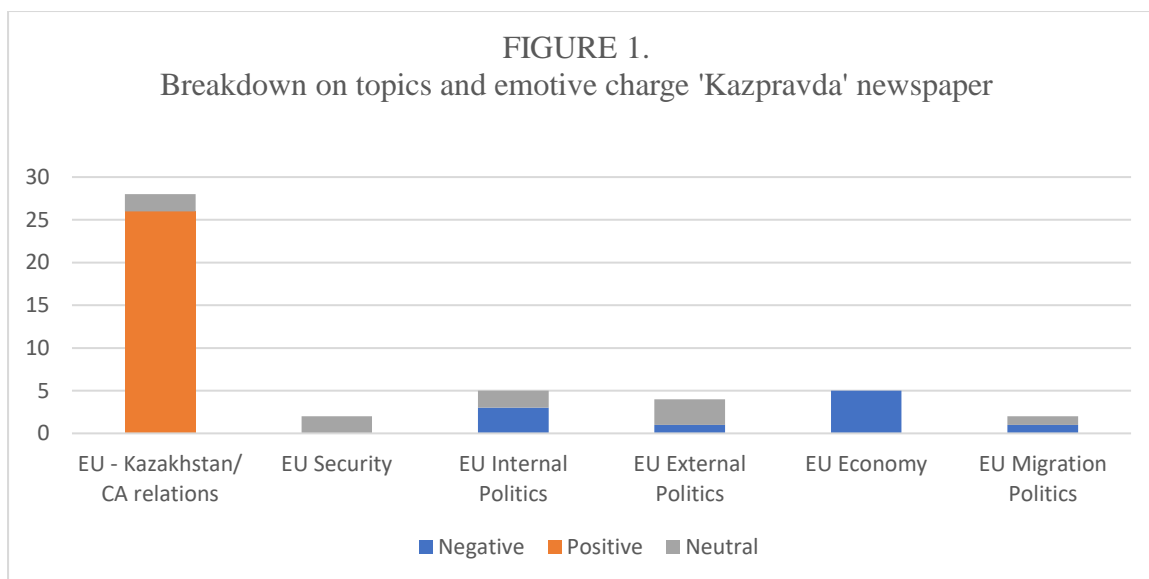
I admit that these categories can be too generic and there are some overlaps which I have hardly tried to escape. However, 'no coding frame is perfect' (Schreier 2012, 147). The coding scheme can be examined through such quality criteria as face validity and content validity (idem, 186-191). To conclude, qualitative content analysis serves the tool for reaching the conclusions through the coding scheme.

6. PERCEPTIONS OF THE EU IN KAZAKHSTAN

In this Chapter, I describe the results of my study followed by a discussion section. First, I present findings from the public data collected from mass media which plays the role of a gatekeeper. Next, I analyze interviews, conducted by me, with the representatives of the elite. Finally, in the discussion part I compare the findings from media materials and interviews, and refer to the previous studies in the field.

6.1. Mass Media

The content analysis of ‘Kazpravda’ official newspaper and ‘Tengrinews’ private news portal reveals that ‘Kazpravda’ contains more news articles and periodicals on the EU than ‘Tengrinews’ portal. Qualitative analysis shows the distribution of articles collected from the period of 2015 - 2017 among the six themes derived from data (the EU-Kazakhstan/ CA relations, EU internal politics, EU external politics, EU security, EU economy and EU migration policy) and the emotive charge/ connotation of the articles respectively (positive, neutral and negative). Further quantitative analysis of the two sources illuminates the diversity in terms of topics coverage. For instance, information on the EU-Kazakhstan/ CA relations prevails by a wide margin in Kazpravda newspaper, whereas in Tengrinews both the EU internal and external politics publications equally dominate. Topics related to the EU security have been discussed in Tengrinews twice as much as in Kazpravda. Similarly, the EU migration policy has been covered more in Tengrinews portal than in Kazpravda. Nonetheless, in both, Kazpravda and Tengrinews the EU economy-related articles have been presented nearly equally. The results of the content-analysis are presented in figure 1 and figure 2.



6.1.1. EU-Kazakhstan/ Central Asia relations

During the next step of qualitative content analysis, this thematic frame – news with local ‘hook’- was defined as the most positive among all other themes. For three years a certain dynamic in bilateral cooperation was noticed. Evidently, signing the Enhanced Partnership for Cooperation and Agreement in 2015 had an impact on development of the intense relations. A lot of attention is paid to signing this agreement in the press. Taking this fact into account, there is a transformation of the EU image as a donor towards the EU perception as a partner. The evolution of the relationship between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the EU to the level of

mature partnership determined the aspiration of both sides to conclude ‘an ambitious and qualitatively new agreement for a reliable, mutually beneficial, effective and equal partnership for the long term’ (Volkov, Kazpravda, 16 February 2016)¹. For instance, as Kalmykov writes:

The implementation of the historical document for both sides will mark a new stage of the bilateral partnership, will significantly expand the horizons of interaction and open up new opportunities for cooperation in all areas of mutual interest (Kalmykov, Kazpravda, 11 March 2016).²

According to another Kazpravda journalist even despite the turbulent processes in the global economy, the debt crisis in the European Union and a sharp drop in world prices for energy, trade, business and investment sentiment did not waver (Mamaev, Kazpravda, 9 November 2017). Thus, Kazakhstan still emphasizes *the image of the EU as a trade partner and investor*. In both Kazpravda and Tengrinews sources *visa regime simplification* was the one of major concerns of Kazakhstani political elite, however, some of those articles were charged emotively neutral.

Articles focusing on the EU – Central Asia relations constitute a relatively low number out of all the collected material. Within the cooperation framework between the EU and Central Asia, the EU is portrayed as *an active party* that could possibly *effect security issues*, especially in context of Afghanistan. Roman Vasilenko, vice-minister for foreign affairs of Kazakhstan claimed:

we are convinced that the development of the situation in Afghanistan will largely depend on the extent to which the external factors involved in the reconstruction of the country are involved, including the European Union... (Urankaeva, Kazpravda, 19 May 2016).³

Kazakhstani side also expects the EU will make a significant financial and practical contribution into resolving such issues as border management and combating illegal drug trafficking, terrorism and extremism. In addition to security issues, according to the materials, the EU is interested in expansion of transport, trade and energy interconnection. The EU is seen

¹ “ambicioznoe i kachestvenno novoe soglasenie dlja nadezhnogo, vzaimovыgodnogo, jeffektivnogo i ravnopravnogo partnerstva na dolgosrochnuju perspektivu” (Volkov, KazPravda, 16 Fevralja 2016)

² “Realizacija istoricheskogo dokumenta dlja obei storon oznamenuet novyj jetap dvustoronnegо partnerstva, budet sposobstvovat' znachitel'nomu rasshireniju gorizontov vzaimodejstvija i otkrytiju novyh vozmozhnostej sotrudnichestva vo vseh sferah, predstavljajushhij vzaimnyj interes.” (Kalmykov, Kazpravda, 11 Marta 2016)

³ “My ubezhdeny, chto razvitie situacii v Afganistane budet vo mnogom zaviset' ot stepeni vovlechnosti v processy rekonstrukcii strany zainteresovannyh vneshnih faktorov, k chislu kotoryh odnosjatsja kak Evropejskij sojuz, tak i gosudarstva – sosedi po regionu.” (Vasilenko v Urankaeva, KazPravda, 19 May 2016)

as a party involved in improving the environmental component (climate change and water resources) in Central Asia through the “WECOOP2” program, particularly, through financing (Urankaeva, Kazpravda, 10 July 2017). Also, in mass media discussion attention was paid to the discussion of the New Strategy for Central Asia which is planned to be launched in 2019.

6.1.2. EU Security

This category includes articles related to the questions of security in Europe. The section was clustered from the news only, therefore the emphasis is made on the nature of the message/event. In Kazakhstani media Europe is not associated with the peaceful region anymore due to the series of terrorists’ attacks. That is why emotive charge of this section is between negative and neutral meaning. For example, the terrorist attack in Catalonia made a huge resonance in media. Despite the EU countries are improving their security measures, Jihadism remains a real danger for the stability of the region. As Tengrinews reports ‘it is obvious that as security measures are strengthened, terrorist methods and instruments are also expanding. They become more inventive and use all “improvised” means to achieve their goals’ (Bejsembaev, Tengrinews, 18 August 2017)⁴. In addition, attacks in Brussels and France organized by the ‘Islamic State’ were discussed. Basically, it means that *the EU is not pictured as an effective actor able to prevent terrorism*.

Neutrally assessed statements mostly consist of the EU measures to sustain peace in Europe. Methods implemented by the EU recently for the strengthening of security include the change of Schengen visas. Another issue covered is a project of a single European army with a slogan ‘a European army must be created to uphold the values of the European Union in the world’ (Tengrinews (a), 8 March 2015)⁵. The united army is presented as a counterpart to protect European values in relations with Russia and as an opportunity to enforce American partner to reach a common decision-making process within transatlantic partnership (Kazpravda (a), 3 May 2016). Thus, *the EU is viewed as a union aiming for militarization*.

⁴ “V celom ochevidno, chto po mere usilenija mer bezopasnosti, metody i instrumenty terroristov takzhe rasshirjajutsja. Oni stanovjatsja bolee izobretatel'nymi i ispol'zujut vse "područnye" sredstva, chtoby dobit'sja svoih celej.” (Bejsembaev, Tengrinews, 18 August 2017)

⁵ “Edinaja evropejskaja armija dolzhna byt' sozdana dlja otstaivanija cennostej Evrosojuza v mire.” (Tengrinews (a), 8 March 2015)

6.1.3. EU Internal Politics

In terms of internal politics held in the EU, the results demonstrate two things. First, the perception of the internal politics of the EU at state of the art was influenced by recent events, mainly, by Brexit, migration crisis' outcome and rise of separatists' movements which are interconnected. Second, it affected negatively the perception of the EU in general. Overall, this section illustrates that media sources chose to reflect on the events from the Euro-skeptic position.

Indeed, Catalanian case has shaken the EU authority and even revealed internal problems of the EU. As announced in 'Kazpravda' with the reference to Associated press 'the European Union prefers to ignore the crisis that has ripened in relations between the Spanish central government and the autonomy' (Kazpravda (c), 28 September 2017)⁶. Moreover, open borders within the Schengen area were put under the question due to migration crisis. The crisis characterized *the EU as an entity which is in danger, which could be destroyed*. 'The very idea of the European Union should be forgotten until the issue of migrant flows to Europe is resolved' (Syzykbaev, Kazpravda, 23 January 2016)⁷.

Moreover, journalists believe that the EU is falling apart, integration itself is highly criticized. For example, as Nicolai Sergeev noted based on Filip Legrand's economist's comment

The EU lacks the "four ingredients" necessary for further integration: a common understanding of the problems, agreement on further steps, "the desire to transfer more sovereignty to the common pot," as well as political leaders capable of becoming the engine of change. (Sergeev, Kazpravda, 24 October 2015)⁸

What is mentioned above does not produce any arguments in favor for the EU participants to stay within the union. Tengrinews (26 June 2016) reports that Sweden, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, Hungary and France could be next standing in line to quit their journey with the EU because of the migration crisis. In another opinion paper it was also stressed that Brexit could lead to collapse of the EU and exit of other countries from the organization: states will

⁶ "Evropejskij sojuz predpochitaet ignorirovat' krizis, nazrevshij v otnoshenijah ispanskogo central'nogo pravitel'stva i avtonomii." (Kazpravda (c), 28 September 2017)

⁷ "sama ideja o Evrosojuze dolzhna byt' zabyta do teh por, poka ne reshitsja vopros s potokami migrantov v Evropu." (Syzykbaev, Kazpravda, 23 January 2016)

⁸ "v ES otsutstvujut «chetyre ingredienta», neobhodimye dlja dal'nejshej integracii: edinoe ponimanie problem, soglasie po povodu dal'nejshih shagov, «zhelanie peredat' v obshhij kotel bol'she suvereniteta», a takzhe politicheskie lidery, sposobnye stat' motorom peremen." (Sergeev, Kazpravda, 24 October 2015)

start threatening to withdraw from the EU, trying to negotiate more favorable terms for themselves (Tengrinews (e), 25 June 2016). Concerning Brexit, ‘the UK, sensing the problems of the EU, is trying to distance itself further, only increasing the problems of the EU’ (Khudaibergenov, Tengrinews, 24 June 2016)⁹. Experts also believe that one of Brexit’s possible outcomes is strengthening of separatist rhetoric both within the UK and in the territory of other European countries (ibid.). Brexit also means that Germany from now on will oversee the EU.

Impressively, how Brexit was described in a metaphor in Tengrinews analytical paper: it was associated with the divorce of a married couple. The EU is portrayed as the husband who invites ‘dubious personalities’ to their common house and those ‘guests’ make claims to their common living space, they do not want to work, they live at their expense and ‘disgrace’ the EU and the UK (Tengrinews (e), 25 June 2016). The authors of the paper compared the EU with the Soviet Union: ‘the idea is good, the incarnation is incompetent. Plus, there is a total dictatorship from the center’ (ibid.)¹⁰.

Elections in France were under attention of Kazakhstani media sources too. Zamir Karazhanov (journalist) says that ‘the little triumph of Marine Le Pen is an alarming signal for those who are planning to live in ... the European Union in the future’¹¹ (Karazhanov, Tengrinews, 11 May 2017). Even EU-oriented Macron recognizes the need to reform the European Union: ‘the problem is long overdue, but nobody discussed it openly’ (ibid.)¹². To sum up, *the EU is pictured as clumsy and inefficient mechanism that needs reconfiguration*.

6.1.4. EU External Politics

Issues concerning the EU external relations were predominately assessed neutral. Among such topics are decisions of Switzerland and Iceland to withdraw applications for accession to the EU and the abolition of the visa regime with Ukraine and Georgia. Also, news from the EU prospective about no possibilities for Turkey to become a member of the EU soon due to the

⁹ “Velikobritanija, predchuvstvuja problemy ES, pytaetsja distancirovat'sja podal'she, lish' usilivaja problemy ES.” (Khudaibergenov, Tengrinews, 24 June 2016)

¹⁰ “On napominaet Sovetskij Sojuz: ideja horoshaja, voploshhenie bezdarnoe. Pljus total'nyj diktat iz centra.” (Tengrinews (e), 25 June 2016)

¹¹ “Pojetomu malen'kij triumf Le Pen - jeto trevozhnij signal dlja teh, kto v budushhem planiruet zhit' v Pjatoj respublike i v Evrosojuze.” (Karazhanov, Tengrinews, 11 May 2017)

¹² “Problema davno nazrela, no otkryto ee poka nikto ne obsuzhdal.” (Karazhanov, Tengrinews, 11 May 2017)

backdrop of the policy pursued by Ankara in recent years (Tengrinews (i), 24 December 2017) are shown neutrally. Discussion about possible prolongation of sanctions against Russia and Jean-Claude Juncker's proposal to restore practical relations with Russia and not allow the US to dictate its policy also were placed under the neutral sub-category although the papers contradict each other.

A lot of attention is paid to the relations between the EU and Turkey. If the news from the EU side were neutral or ambivalent, reports from Turkey and Kazakhstan present complexity of the relations between the EU and Turkey and position it more towards negatively-assessed situation. For instance, Kazpravda cited Erdogan: 'Turkey has not been able to join the EU for 54 years, the reason is quite clear: the EU is a union of the Crusaders, they lied to us for 14 years, and they continue doing that' (Kazpravda (b), 26 April 2017)¹³. Another analytical paper highlights complex nature of the dialogue between the EU and Turkey. Askar Nursha, foreign policy expert in 'Institute of World Economics and Politics', states that Europe and Turkey have lack of understanding between each other: that is why diplomatic conflicts between the EU countries (the Netherlands, Austria) and Turkey occur. Turkey believes that it has a right to become a member of the EU, while the EU cannot oversee decay of democracy in Turkey and cannot guarantee membership in the EU.

With the coming to power of Erdogan and the strengthening of the Islamic factor in the country, criticism of Turkey in Europe has intensified. There are many questions to the political style of Erdogan's leadership, although there are elements of bias and misunderstanding of Turkish specifics in Europe. (Atojanc, Tengrinews, 15 March 2017)¹⁴

Overall, the *EU is seen as weak, ineffective and subjected to the blackmailing* from the Turkey side because of migration crisis.

6.1.5. EU Economy

Surprisingly, news concerning the EU economy were delivered in a negative tone and only a few articles were presented in neutral connotation. There is some logic behind this: previous three years were influenced by weakening of the Greek economy, expenses to deal with the

¹³ "Turcija ne mozhet vstupit' v ES uzhe 54 goda. Prichina sovershenno ponjatna: ES – jeto sojuz krestonoscev. Oni lgali nam 14 let podrjad. I prodolzajut jeto delat'." (Erdogan v Kazpravda (b), 26 April 2017)

¹⁴ "S prihodom k vlasti Jerdogana i usileniem islamskogo faktora v strane kritika v otnoshenii Turcii v Evrope usililas'. Mnogo voprosov k politicheskomu stilju rukovodstva Jerdogana, hotja sushhestvujut v Evrope i jelementy predvzjatosti i nedoponimaniya tureckoj specifiki." (Atojanc, Tengrinews, 15 March 2017)

wave of the migration crisis and finally, Brexit did not add any growth for the European economy.

Regarding economic situation in Greece, media was considerate about the outcome of the economic crisis, because the default in Greece could create a domino effect across Europe (Tengrinews, 7 January 2015). From the one side, there was a hope that the EU will not let Greece to drown in debt, from the other side, the European Central bank policy could be barely promising (Sergeev, Kazpravda, 1 July 2015). Despite the situation reached its culmination, the European Union did not leave people suffering from the Greek crisis in trouble, even when citizens voted against the reforms required by international creditors (Tengrinews (b), 5 July 2015), which smoothed the corners but still did not resolve the main problem.

Correspondingly, the economic policy of the European Central Bank and other creditors was criticized not only by Greek society but also by German citizens. This was confirmed by demonstrations in Frankfurt in front of the ECB. Situation over the European economy was compared with financial “hypotony” during the year 2015:

This “negative” mood of the Eurozone, comparable, perhaps ... with the state of hypotension, which is exacerbated by a temperature well below 36.0. Doctors know: the patient is alive, but in a state of complete decline of strength, apathy and minimal capacity. (Yussupova, Kazpravda, 27 March 2015)¹⁵

The economy of the EU is perceived on its decay, losing its strength: Europe simply cannot cope financially with the obligations it took on itself in terms of supporting immigrants and various funds (African, Syrian and fund to fight hunger) (Ivanova, Kazpravda, 17 October 2015). Seeking to help others, the EU forgets about internal problems of the society such as high unemployment rates and decline in living standards.

The EU was described as a ‘ghostly paradise’: ‘Dreams about the happy life among the majority of EU citizens are smashed in the cruelest manner. Need has knocked at their door’ (Fjodorova, Kazpravda, 10 October 2015)¹⁶. The economic crisis radically changed the conditions of life

¹⁵ “Prizrachnyj raj”: “Takoј «minusovyj» nastroj evrozony, sopostavim, pozhaluj... s sostojaniem gipotonika, kotoroe usugubljaetsja temperaturaj znachitel'no nizhe 36,0. Mediki znajut: pacient zhiv, no v sos-tojanii polnogo upadka sil, apatii i minimal'noj deesposobnosti.” (Yussupova, Kazpravda, 27 May 2015)

¹⁶ “Raduzhnye mechty o schastlivom nastojashhem u bol'shinstva grazhdan ES razbity samym zhestokim obrazom. S hvalennoj nezavisimost'ju k segodnjashnim evropejcam v dveri probralas' nuzhda.” (Fjodorova, Kazpravda, 10 October 2015)

throughout Europe. Kazpravda notes that products, services, labor and housing standards are getting worse. As Beleckij (Kazpravda, 17 April 2015) said ‘the former good times will not return’¹⁷. He also called the EU as a ‘second-class Europe’ (ibid.)¹⁸. Declining salaries in the UK and Germany and declining social benefits throughout all Europe, youth unemployment, the quality of products and infrastructure suffers similarly. Ultimately, in this section *the EU is observed losing its economic power by its own fault*.

6.1.6. EU Migration Policy

This category concentrates on disputes and coordination of the migration policy and multiculturalism in Europe. I recognize that this category relates to the EU internal politics and the EU economy. However, in this section I focus on the EU’s reaction on the migration crisis, while the other categories are affected by the outcome of the ineffective migration policy. The majority of the articles here resembles negative and neutral interpretation and only one article can be placed under the sub-category ‘positive’.

From the collected data it is clear that Europe suffers from the flows of immigrants and cannot come to a common decision on quotas for distribution of immigrants among the EU countries. Typically closing of Hungarian, Slovenian and Austrian borders has undermined the unity of Europeans. On the contrary, ‘Europe can cope with the influx [of refugees] only through joint efforts’ (Tengrinews (d), 29 October 2015)¹⁹. The migration policy of Angela Merkel was criticized by experts saying that Europe cannot take all the refugees in Europe: instead ‘it would be much more sensible to concentrate maximum efforts on the peaceful settlement of the conflict in the country’ (Gutorova, Tengrinews, 29 March 2016)²⁰. Alternatively, to the previously mentioned countries, Prime-minister of Finland ‘urged all Finns to follow his example and demonstrate solidarity with the refugees who are sent to Europe from the countries torn apart by war and poverty’ (Tengrinews (c), 5 September 2015)²¹.

¹⁷ “Prezhnie dobre vremena uzhe ne vernutsja.” (Beleckij, Kazpravda, 17 April 2015)

¹⁸ “Evropa vtorogo sorta” (ibid.)

¹⁹ “s naplyvom Evropa mozhet spravit'sja tol'ko sovmestnymi usilijami.” (Tengrinews (d), 29 October 2015)

²⁰ “Gorazdo razumnnee bylo by sosredotochit' maksimum usilij na mirnom uregulirovanii konflikta v jetoj strane.” (Gutorova, Tengrinews, 29 Marta 2016)

²¹ “Sipilja takzhe prizval vseh finnov posledovat' ego primeru i prodemonstrirovat' solidarnost' s bezhencami, kotorye napravljajutsja v Evropu iz razdiraemyh vojn i nishhetoj stran.” (Tengrinews (c), 5 September 2015)

There are also discussions on *Europe's failure to adapt immigrants among locals* so they would not adjoin terrorist organizations: 'if Europe has not been able to properly adapt here these little boys from Molenbek who preferred to become terrorists, how can it assimilate the millions of new migrants?' (Gutorova, Tengrinews, 29 March 2016)²². Since the flow of the immigrants was substantially high, there is a risk that not only people who truly needed help squeezed into European "paradise" but also illegal immigrants. Some European countries as Latvia and Lithuania are in doubts regarding quotas system since the population of local nation is on the decline.

Illegal migration challenges the civilizational foundations of Europe; therefore, the European Union needs to create some kind of total control system, which must take new measures of electronic police registration not only of migrants, but of all EU citizens (Fjodorova, Kazpravda, 8 September 2015).²³

European citizens have been caught between radical movements and refugees. To summarize the migration policy of the EU this phrase would fit best: the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

6.1.7. Normative Framing: the EU as a Norm-setter?

The *EU is extremely rarely visible as a norm-setter* except for a couple of cases on topics of agriculture, food standards, education and technological standards within the EU-Kazakhstan/Central Asia framework. Moreover, the case of Brexit showed *how not to develop integration process within the EAEU* but hardly one can call it a positive norm-setting example.

What is happening now in *the European Union is the best textbook for us, members of the EAEU*. The two associations mentioned are, of course, not identical. But they have a lot in common. So, the rake is placed in approximately the same places. Our task is to make a map of the minefield in advance, in order then to bypass if not all, then at least most of the dangerous areas... [British] citizens formulated the main problem - *the problem of the imbalance of powers of the supranational body and local governments*. (Gutorova, Tengrinews, 30 November 2015)²⁴

²² "Esli Evropa ne smogla normal'no adaptirovat' u sebja vot jetih vot mal'chishek iz Molenbeka, kotorye predpochli stat' terroristami, kak ona smozhet assimilirovat' milliony novyh migrantov?" (Gutorova, Tengrinews, 29 March 2016)

²³ "Nelegal'naja migracija brosaet vyzov civilizacionnym osnovam Evropy, pojetomu Evrosojuzu neobhodimo sozdat' nekuju total'nuju sistemu kontrolja, kotoraja dolzhna prinjat' novye mery jelektronnogo policejskogo ucheta ne tol'ko migrantov, no i vseh grazhdan ES." (Fjodorova, Kazpravda, 8 September 2015)

²⁴ "To, chto proishodit sejchas v Evrosojuzhe - luchshij uchebnik dlja nas, chlenov EAES. Dva upomjanutyh ob#edinenija, konechno, ne identichny. No obshhego u nih mnogo. A znachit, grabli razlozheny priblizitel'no v

In the case of media, 'normatively flavored' articles could be divided on those which are supported (discussed in a positive light) and those which are criticized (meaning that these norms are likely to stay aside from Kazakhstani context) from journalists' prospective.

Normative dialogue between the EU and Kazakhstan/ CA region is barely visible. However, in the EU-Kazakhstan relations there is a shift from the EU norm-sending monologue towards dialogue even in *limited* aspects such as *rule of law*, *human rights* (excluding LGBT rights) and *sustainable development* (green economy). Norms are mentioned briefly and usually have a low visibility within the text. Such norms as *sustainable development* covering ecological issues in region and *peace* in case of Afghanistan vulnerability were mentioned on the EU-Central Asia platform and the EU is perceived as acting in accordance with the latter norms.

It is also visible in several articles that the EU is protecting its own norms and values in relation to Turkey, in particular, human rights. Likewise, in some exceptional cases the EU's response to the refugees' crisis is perceived as acting in accordance with the social solidarity principle, when the EU provides refugees with financial assistance, food and houses. To illustrate, welcoming policy of Finland and Juha Sipilä supports the claim.

Among the norms under critics (*good governance and democracy*) is the absence of the EU's reaction on the issues of Catalonia when Catalonia wanted to hold the referendum (double standards). In addition, the EU is criticized not only by countries-participants for example, Baltic States, Spain, Romania and Bulgaria but also by Switzerland for its core values.

The value system advocated by Western civilization has completely gone bankrupt, and we are trying to squeeze in there at any cost and take advisors to those who call the degeneration of consciousness a progress, and the demolition of the millennial landmarks of mankind by 'Western values'. (Fjodorova, Kazpravda, 10 October 2015)²⁵

Overall, the image of the EU in the normative setting is ambivalent, it is more applicable to the EU-oriented news. Moreover, the EU is seen as achieving normative attractiveness also through the financial support of various projects in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. From one

odinakovyh mestah. Nasha zadacha - zaranee sostavit' kartu minnogo polja, chtoby potom obojti esli ne vse, to hotja by bol'shuju chast' opasnyh uchastkov... Ee grazhdane sformulirovali glavnuju problemu - problemu disbalansa polnomochij nadnacional'nogo organa i mestnyh pravitel'stv." (Gutorova, Tengrinews, 30 November 2015)

²⁵ "Sistema cennostej, kotoruju propagandiruet zapadnaja civilizacija, polnost'ju obankrotilas', a my pytaemsja vtisnut'sja tuda ljuboj cenoi i berem v sovetchiki teh, kto nazyvaet degeneraciju soznanija progressom, a snos tysjacheletnih orientirov chelovechestva – «zapadnymi cennostjami»." (Fjodorova, Kazpravda, 10 October 2015)

point, we can name the EU as a moderately visible normative actor and merely discussed topic in a deeper context. However, a number of the above named examples tells us that the topic (normative aspects and norm-setting in Kazakhstani mass media, in particular) should be further studied using a bigger amount of data (in a broader-scale research) to make a clear decision.

6.2. Interviews

6.2.1. EU-Kazakhstan/ CA relations

The following section presents an overview of the topics mentioned in the interviews dataset in terms of bilateral or regional cooperation.

The image of a trade partner and an investor is the most consistent among the interviewed experts. The EU is ‘a key economic partner’. There is a positive dynamic in relations between Kazakhstan and the EU. The work continues mainly within the framework of the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between Kazakhstan and the EU (since the end of the 1990s) and a new agreement on expanding partnership and cooperation. At the same time, there are no significant changes (since the EU became the largest trading partner). Most of all, the issues of trade, investment, tourism, development of science and education affect Kazakhstan, and to the lesser extent - the development of democratic institutions, justice, law and order (which will be explained in detail in the normative frame). There are some expectations concerning positive dynamic in diplomatic relations and expectations about visa facilitation processes.

However, there are several drawbacks revealed by the interviewees. First, some of the interviewees mentioned their concern about the EU’s interests in Kazakhstan, if the EU needs Kazakhstan at all. ‘Kazakhstan is not the first violin’ (Interviewee 10)²⁶. Second, high barriers for non-European companies make it impossible for Kazakhstani business to enter the EU market, the EU is blocked for Kazakhstani trade (except natural resources). Third, the EU is perceived as *a distant partner* and difficulties in obtaining visas for getting into the EU area do not contribute to the rapprochement of Kazakhstan and the EU countries.

²⁶ “uvy, Kazahstan – ne pervaja skripka” (Interviewee 10)

6.2.2. *EU Internal Politics*

The following dimension covers such themes as integration, domestic issues, processes within the EU and social issues with both positive and negative interpretations. Some metaphors are presented as description of the Union's domestic policy. The most frequent cases referred to are the rise of radical movements, Brexit, events in Catalonia and polyphony during decision-making process on variety of political and economic issues.

I start from the exploration of the negative sides since they dominate in the discussion. *The EU is portrayed as a construction in crisis*. The representatives of all cohorts highlighted that the EU passes through the difficult time: there is political crisis, 'management crisis' (Interviewee 2), to be precise. The EU is trying to integrate, but does not demonstrate high efficiency.

First, the EU is clearly seen as a union without unity. Indeed, one of the reasons is complex structure of the union which includes 28 countries. For instance, NGO's representative emphasized the three-speed system which breaks the unity of the EU: 'Different speeds, world pictures, progress, there are countries that have gone far enough, there are countries that are in the middle of the path, there are countries that are only at the beginning' (Interviewee 4)²⁷. Another NGO's representative highlighted that 'now the EU is passing the test for strength, as it is probably the most turbulent period in the history of this bloc' (Interviewee 7)²⁸. The situation within the Union has been described as 'a sinking ship' (Interviewee 1) and as a 'storm' and the reaction of the EU as 'confusion' and even 'numbness' (Interviewee 3, Interviewee 4). Comparison with the football team was made by media elite to show the lack of consensus inside the organization:

Now they have problems with strategy and distribution of roles. Each of them has its own ideal role, but the feeling that the attacker was put on the gate, and the defender on the attack. They are not in their best positions. A team that does not have a coach. They coexist peacefully. But when questions concerning the Union arise, then problems again begin. (Interviewee 13)²⁹

²⁷ "Raznye skorosti vosprijatija mira, kartin mira, prodvizhenija, est' strany, kotorye dostatochno daleko ushli, est' strany, kotorye v seredine puti, est' strany, kotorye tol'ko v nachale." (Interviewee 4)

²⁸ "I sejchas ES prohodit ispytanie na prochnost', tak kak jeto navernoje samyj takoj turbulentnyj period v istorii jetogo bloka." (Interviewee 7)

²⁹ "Sejchas u nih problemy so strategiej i raspredeleniem rolej. U kazhdogo iz nih est' svoja ideal'naja rol', no oshhushhenie, chto napadajushhego postavili na vorota, a zashhitnika na napadenie. Oni imenno ne v svoih luchshih pozicijah. Komanda, u kotoroj net trenera. Oni mirno sosushhestvujut. No kogda vstajut voprosy sojuza, to opjat' nachinajutsja problemy." (Interviewee 13)

The EU was also pictured as a married couple after the honeymoon and the harsh reality following after that.

The newlyweds need to decide who takes out the garbage, who works where, how much gasoline to buy, who takes the children to school. If you manage to keep love and respect for each other, then of course, then the family, in this case, the organization, remains. In general, these little things will break any love, any marriage. (Interviewee 4)³⁰

Second, all the interviewees to some extent referred to the *rise of populist movements and separatists' motives*. 'Everything is changing. Britain left the EU, the union loses its members. I am afraid that this can continue. For example, what is happening in Spain' (Interviewee 8)³¹. There is a tendency towards strengthening of the right political parties advocating segregation from the EU, for example, in France, Austria, Hungary and Poland, what makes experts concerned about it (Interviewee 9, Interviewee 2, Interviewee 1). According to an NGO representative, the crisis of leadership caused by vague notions and principles of the EU what unintentionally creates a habitat for populists: 'We see that now leaders entering the European Parliament are those with whom the majority of European politicians before would not even eat a hot dog at one km' (Interviewee 4)³². As media elite noticed, recent processes taking place 'bared thin places. Brexit is the most vivid confirmation of this' (Interviewee 3).³³

Third, among the other features making the EU's domestic policy more vulnerable mentioned by experts and media representatives is the relation between pan-European identity and national identities. As an independent researcher said: 'Despite the fact that a common European identity is being formed, but all people are divided, citizens, states still have their own national interests' (Interviewee 2)³⁴. It is clear that

³⁰ "molodozhenam nuzhno reshat', kto vynosit musor, kto gde rabotaet, pochem benzin pokupat', kto otvodit detej v shkolu. Vot jeti vse veshhi, esli umudrjaesh'sja sohranit' ljubov' i uvazhenie drug k drugu, to konechno, togda sem'ja, v dannom sluchae organizacija, sohranjaetsja. Ponjatno, chto voobshhe vot jeti bytovye melochi razob'jut ljubuju ljubov', ljuboj brak." (Interviewee 4)

³¹ "Vse menjaetsja. Britanija vyshla, sojuz terjaet chlenov. Ja bojus', chto jeto mozhet prodolzhit'sja. Naprimer, to, chto proishodit v Ispanii." (Interviewee 8)

³² "My vidim, chto sejchas vybivajutsja v lidery te, s kem bol'shinstvo politikov ran'she dazhe by ne selo est' hot-dog v odnom km, oni prohodjat v Evroparlament." (Interviewee 4)

³³ "Poslednie neskol'ko let stali proishodit' processy, kotorye ogolili tonkie mesta. Breksit – samoe jarkoe tomu podtverzhenie." (Interviewee 3)

³⁴ "Nesmotrja na to, chto formiruetsja evropejskaja identichnost', no vse ljudi deljatsja, grazhdane, vse ravno est' svoi nacional'nye interesy." (Interviewee 2)

National identities are strong enough, especially in Eastern Europe, which has recently joined the EU. The contradiction between national identities and the pan-European one is often a factor affecting the EU's not very effective policy. (Interviewee 11)³⁵

In addition, many researchers, media, business and civil society representatives also stressed that the policy of rapid expansion did not benefit the EU but added the problems to be resolved.

Fourth, the lack of consensus among the countries inside the EU and Brussels' bureaucracy confirm 'the non-viability of the EU in the form in which it exists now' (Interviewee 1)³⁶ in the long term. The internal division among the EU members on economic, migration and foreign policy issues, noticed by all participants, does not let the EU to become a full-fledged member in the world politics. As media representative remarked 'when Syrian refugees rushed to Europe and the whole world has been following it, at the same time some problems of the EU were revealed: the absence of barriers, clear legislation, agreements' (Interviewee 3)³⁷.

Finally, migration policy and multiculturalism have been discussed from both, negative and positive perspective. The majority of the elite' representatives mentioned that countries do not want to take any obligations concerning refugees. It seems that society cannot integrate or adapt refugees. 'The ability to adapt people of different origins is not infinite. The level of political openness of Europe exceeds the level of social openness in Europe' (Interviewee 9)³⁸. Media expert also provided examples when there were conflicts between locals and immigrants, and the police and authorities were taking the side of migrants, ignoring the interests of the local population.

Despite negative aspects mentioned above, there are some positive sides of the EU internal politics. *The EU is perceived as a unique project in terms of integration.* For example, an expert of the governmental organization said: 'The EU is the most powerful, the most successful integration project in the world' (Interviewee 5)³⁹. Media elite representative echoed the EU's

³⁵ "Dostatochno sil'ny identichnosti, osobenno stran Vostochnoj Evropy, kotorye otnositel'no nedavno prisoeдинilis' k ES. Protivorechie mezhdru nacional'nymi identichnostjami i obshheevropejskoj, zachastuju javljaetsja kakim-to slabym faktorom ili faktorom, vlijajushhim na ne sovsem jeffektivnuju politiku ES." (Interviewee 11)

³⁶ "ES v tom vide, v kakom on nahoditsja sejchas, nezhiznesposoben". (Interviewee 1)

³⁷ "Kogda sirijskie bezhency rinulis' v Evropu i ves' mir za jetim sledil, togda zhe ogolilis' kakie-to veshhi: otsutstvie bar'erov, vnjatnogo zakonodatel'stva, dogovorennostej." (Interviewee 3)

³⁸ "Vozmozhnost' adaptirovat' ljudej raznogo proishozhdenija ne beskonechny. Uroven' politicheskoy otkrytosti Evropy prevyshaet uroven' social'noj otkrytosti Evropy." (Interviewee 9)

³⁹ "ES – odin iz moshhnejshih, samyh uspesnyh integracionnyh processov v mire." (Interviewee 5)

main postulate that it is an example of integration based on the democratic principles (Interviewee 8).

Even though the EU is seen as an entity undergoing the crisis, many experts strongly believe that *the EU* will face many different challenges on its way but it *has a good chance to survive* because of its experience and diversity.

The European Union is a union of babies, young, mature, new, old and experienced members... But all this gives hope that the EU will survive. Because, as a rule, not the smartest survive, but the adapted ones, not simple, but complex ones. Reconciliation of different mentalities, different worlds is an interesting experience. (Interviewee 4)⁴⁰

Diverse design of the EU contributes to the positive image of the EU in Kazakhstan. Thus, cooperating with the EU the interviewees realized how the format of the relations differs from cooperation with the other countries. For example, ‘the experience of Finland may differ from the experience of Germany or Hungary’ (Interviewee 7)⁴¹. The EU has an ability to solve problems due to its diversity.

Interviews also appraised the comfort of existence and coexistence of people from different national backgrounds created by means of the EU effective internal policy. According to expert from private Think Tank, the EU’s migration policy is quite welcoming: ‘There are no hard barriers for obtaining any kind of social guarantees. General rules show that you can freely enter the EU territory and settle down’ (Interviewee 16)⁴². To sum up, people are allowed to exist in one context, but at the same time remaining in harmony with their own identity if they do not violate the criminal code (Interviewee 3).

6.2.3. EU External Politics

Altogether, the representatives of the cohorts agreed that *the EU cannot actualize its potential* conducting foreign policy *due to lack of consolidate positions on foreign policy issues*. Opinions regarding the EU role in the world politics were divided on two parts: positive when

⁴⁰ “Evrosojuz - jeto ob"edinenie i molodyh, junyh, zrelyh, novyh, staryh, opytnyh... No vse jeto kak raz i daet nadezhdu na to, chto ES vyzhivet. Potomu chto kak pravilo, vyzhivaet ne samye umnye, a prisposoblennye, ne prostye, a slozhnye.” (Interviewee 4)

⁴¹ “Opyt Finljandii mozhet otlichat'sja ot opyta Vengrii, opyt Vengrii ot opyta Bel'gii.” (Interviewee 7)

⁴² “Net kakih-to zhestkij pregrad dlja poluchenija kakih-to social'nyh garantij. Obshhie pravila pokazyvajut, chto dostatochno svobodno mozžno v"ehat' na territoriju ES i poselit'sja.” (Interviewee 16)

the EU is portrayed as a one of the leaders in the world community and an entity sustaining peace and negative, when the EU is described as a weak foreign police actor.

To begin with, I provide examples of the negative emotional responses on the EU behavior in the world politics. The EU has been highly criticized for being dependent player in its foreign policy choices. A typical comparison to the US was made. Business representatives undoubtedly agreed on the opinion that the EU is always looking back to the US, it is almost a right hand of the US. Some media representatives and quite a few experts only supported this point of view. In other words, ‘the EU plays under the tune of the United States. The US has a very strong influence on the EU’s actions. If not to say more. The first violin in this orchestra is played by the USA’ (Interviewee 14)⁴³. A deeper description of the EU’s dependency on the US was given by scholars (experts). For example,

The weak side of the EU [...] is the inability of the Europeans themselves to determine their foreign policy priorities, their amorphous foreign policy, the lack of their own supranational European defense structures and forces, its own security concept different from NATO. (Interviewee 1)⁴⁴

To continue, the EU has been compared to the other global players, namely the US, China and Russia, and comparison was not in favor of the EU.

Certainly, the EU seeks to position itself at the level of world powers like the US, China, and Russia. Nevertheless, it has still a very few resources. The fact that it pursues certain ambitions, areas of interest called the Neighborhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership. Yes, there are ambitions, but they do not correspond to the EU’s capabilities. (Interviewee 16)⁴⁵

Above all, there are also other statements showing that the EU does not look like a strong, self-sufficient player. ‘The EU's influence is limited by its mandate’ (Interviewee 10)⁴⁶ that is why it is difficult to call the EU a leader of international politics. Rather it was blamed for being not a global leader anymore. As one of the NGO’s representatives noted ‘the EU has sufficiently

⁴³ “ES igraet pod dudku SShA. Ochen' sil'noe vlijanie SShA na dejstvija ES. Esli ne bol'she. Pervuju skripku v dannom orkestre igraet SShA.” (Interviewee 14)

⁴⁴ “Slaboj storonoj ES, my schitaem... nesposobnost' samim evropejcam opredeljat' svoi vneshnepoliticheskie prioritety, ih amorfnuju vneshnjuju politiku, otsutstvie sobstvennyh nadnacional'nyh evropejskih oboronnyh struktur i sil, sobstvennoj, otlichnoj ot NATO, koncepcii bezopasnosti.” (Interviewee 1)

⁴⁵ “Konechno, ES stremitsja pozicionirovat' sebja na urovne mirovyh derzhav kak SShA, Kitaj, Rossija. Tem ne menee, poka vse-taki malo resursov u nego. To, chto on provodit opredeljonnye svoi ambicii, zony interesa, kotorye on nazывaet politika sosedstva, vostochnogo partnerstva. Da, ambicii est', no oni ne sootvetstvujut vozmozhnostjam.” (Interviewee 16)

⁴⁶ “Vlijanie ES ogranichenno ego polnomochijami...” (Interviewee 10)

strong intellectual ambitions, but it lacks universality, totality and globality' (Interviewee 4).⁴⁷ What is more, the EU was described as 'a slave, not a leader' (Interviewee 1).⁴⁸ It was not considered a leader due to the lack of a consolidated international policy and the difference in positions on various international issues (from Iraq, Libya, Syria to Africa and Ukraine).

Last but not least, the Ukrainian case significantly undermined the authority of the EU as a strong player in the world arena. 'The situation with Ukraine does not characterize the EU very well, neither Brussels nor Germany. There is no specific support' (Interviewee 2)⁴⁹. Media elite representative said that if the EU were a great power, it would not allow Russia to do so with Ukraine (Interviewee 8).

In contrast, the positive dimension contains representation of *the EU as a one of a kind, balance-keeper, peace-promoter and diplomatic actor*. In terms of comparison with the US, here the EU is perceived as 'a power for good' and there are hopes that you could develop it more in the near future. As NGO's representative stated, 'perhaps, when the US is currently isolating itself, the EU will be able to act as a leader, not just a US partner in military-political and economic matters' (Interviewee 7)⁵⁰. 'The EU maintains a balance, as it turned out now. Previously, it seemed that the EU and the US represented so-called Western world. Now, when times change, it maintains a balance' (Interviewee 8)⁵¹.

In addition, the EU is portrayed as one of the leaders and an effective global player influencing world's political landscape. As a representative of the media elite emphasized,

...it is impossible to turn off the EU from world politics, because all these meetings of the Group of Eight, all attempts to leave the integration or enter it, it always in one way or another attracts attention and it always forces other players reckon with the EU (Interviewee 3).⁵²

⁴⁷ "Vot u ES pri dostatochno sil'nyh intellektual'nyh ambicijah, vot jetoj vseobshnosti i total'nosti, global'nosti ne hvataet." (Interviewee 4)

⁴⁸ "vedomyj, a ne vedushhij" (Interviewee 1)

⁴⁹ "K sozhaleniju, ni Brjussel', ni Germanija...situacija s Ukrainoj ne ochen' horosho harakterizuet ES. Net nikakoj konkretnoj podderzhkoj." (Interviewee 2)

⁵⁰ "Vozmozžno, kogda sejchas idet samoizoljacija SShA, ES smozhet vystupit' kak raz v roli lidera, a ne prosto partnera SShA po voenno- politicheskim i jekonomicheskim voprosam." (Interviewee 7)

⁵¹ "ES podderzhivaet balans, kak vyjasnilos' teper'. Ran'she, kazalos', chto ES i SShA tak nazyvaemyj zapadnyj mir. Teper', kogda vremena menjajutsja, on podderzhivaet balans." (Interviewee 8)

⁵² "Potomu chto nel'zja vzjat' tak prosto i vykljuchit' ES iz mirovoj politiki, potomu chto vse jeti vstrechi Bol'shoj vos'merki, vse popytki vyjti iz integracionnogo ob"edinenija ili vojti v nego, oni vseгда tem ili inym obrazom prikovyvajut vnimanie i oni vseгда zastavljajut vseh ostal'nyh igrokov schitat'sja s nimi." (Interviewee 3)

The EU represents ‘not classical leadership inherent for states: this is so far the only organization of its kind’ that represents one of the poles in contemporary international relations (Interviewee 6).⁵³ Similarly, the attention was paid to the importance of consolidated policy of the EU countries which is a significant factor. ‘The EU is the main actor of modern international relations, along with the US, Japan, etc., the EU clearly takes one of the leading positions’ (Interviewee 11).⁵⁴

Even though, the EU is pictured as a product for domestic needs, it affects not only regional but also international politics. ‘The EU is a global phenomenon, although it is designed for domestic consumption, it starts to affect many dimensions in other countries.’ (Interviewee 4).⁵⁵ Experts also noted that the EU has a significant potential to ‘implement a certain soft policy in non-European countries, and influence global, regional or interregional crises’ (Interviewee 11).⁵⁶

Considering global security issues, the elites highlighted the role of ensuring peace and stability in Europe:

The EU has fulfilled and is fulfilling the main goal for which it was created for. All other regions should be grateful, otherwise it would be a region with high instability and the consequences could be serious enough, significant, and catastrophic for the nearby regions. (Interviewee 7)⁵⁷

Finally, the EU’s diplomacy was appreciated. European foreign policy has been called as a balanced, accurate and cautious.

The policy of the EU can be characterized - very British, despite the fact that the British are no longer there. Somehow restrained and they do not allow for any things like Russia does or the Kyrgyz president. Europe has a very extensive diplomatic experience. (Interviewee 8)⁵⁸

⁵³ “Neklassicheskoe liderstvo, prisushhee gosudarstvam: jeto poka chto edinstvennaja v svoem rode organizacija.” (Interviewee 6)

⁵⁴ “ES javljaetsja osnovnym aktorom sovremennyh mezhdunarodnyh otnoshenij, narjadu s SShA, Japoniej i t.d., to ES odnoznachno zanimaet odnu iz liderujushhih pozicij.” (Interviewee 11)

⁵⁵ “ES javlenie global'noe, hotja ono rasschitano na vnutrennee potreblenie, ono nachinaet vlijat' na mnogie izmerenija v drugih stranah.” (Interviewee 4)

⁵⁶ “ES mozhet osushhestvlyat' i provodit' opredelennuju mjagkuju politiku v neevropejskih stranah, i okazivat' vlijanie na reshenie global'nyh, regional'nyh ili zhe mezhregional'nyh krizisov.” (Interviewee 11)

⁵⁷ “ES vypolnil i vypolnjaet glavnuju cel', dlja kotoroj on byl sozdan. Vse ostal'nye regiony dolzhny byt' blagodarny, inache jeto byl by region s vysokoj nestabil'nost'ju i posledstvija mogli by byt' dostatochno ser'eznymi, znachimymi, katastroficheskimi dlja blizlezhashhih regionov.” (Interviewee 7)

⁵⁸ “Politiku ES mozžno oharakterizovat' – ochen' po-anglijski, nesmotrja na to, chto anglichane tuda bol'she ne vhodjat. Kak-to sderzhanno i oni ne dopuskajut kakih-to veshhej kak Rossija delaet ili Kyrgyzskij prezident. U Evropy ochen' bol'shoj opyt diplomatii.” (Interviewee 8)

The EU is perceived as following its basic principles and having good relations with the external world, emphasis was put on China as another significant pole of power.

6.2.4. EU Economy

European economy set also includes negative and positive dimensions. Overall, positive characteristics of the EU in this frame prevail. There are two clusters which constitute negative perception of the EU.

The first cluster includes negative economic dynamic in general due to debt crisis and economic imbalance, large economic gap between the EU members. The interviewees mentioned that the EU economy is slowing down reminding that the macroeconomic situation remains problematic. As one of the Think Tank experts claimed acceptance of the new members who were not ready in economic terms now causes a lot of problems and in the conditions of a single market, a single economy, these problems become common, affecting everyone (Interviewee 6). Clearly, the situation in Greece is still viewed as ‘trouble-making’ too.

Interesting point was presented by another expert:

The EU is losing its historic competition with the growing Asia and North America. This is reminiscent of the transfer of the relay trade and economic championship from Venice and Genoa in the XVI century to Seville and Lisbon, and in the XVI-XVII centuries to Antwerp, Amsterdam, London. (Interviewee 1)⁵⁹

The second cluster covers aspects influencing social stability of the region and business issues. Respondents detected ‘cuts’ of social benefits and unemployment among young people. Business representative highlighted problems of aging nations. Thus, ‘the number of working population will decrease, and the number of unemployed will increase. This will create great difficulties in the next 10-20 years’ (Interviewee 12).⁶⁰ Lack of support of the domestic companies (producers) was noticed, especially in the south of France and Italy. While another negative feature of the EU is ‘a system of quotas, as a result of which the traditional branches of the economies of some of the new EU members have found themselves in a crisis situation’

⁵⁹ “ES proigryvaet istoricheskoe sorevnovanie s rastushhej Aziej i Severnoj Amerikoj. Jeto napominaet peredachu jestafety trgovogo-jekonomicheskogo pervenstva ot Venecii i Genui v XVI veke Sevil'e i Lissabonu, a v XVI-XVII vv. Antverpeni, Amsterdamu, Londonu.” (Interviewee 1)

⁶⁰ “Kolichestvo rabotajushhego naselenija budet umen'shat'sja, a kolichestvo nerabotajushhih uvelichivat'sja. Jeto budet sozdavat' bol'shie trudnosti v blizhajshie 10-20 let.” (Interviewee 12)

(Interviewee 10).⁶¹ Occasionally, migrants were seen as an additional load for the EU's economy.

Among positive perceptions of the EU are general views of *the EU as a prosperous region that deserves respect* and *specific achievements of the EU as a technologically developed area*, also there are noticeable discussions of the EU's input in agriculture and 'green economy'.

Despite in the negative dimension some representatives of the elite hold an opinion that the EU is in a recession, here some experts admit that the EU has become economically stronger than it was during the debt crisis. The EU was recognized as an 'economic power'. Some of the NGO's representatives called the EU as 'the locomotive of world economic development' (Interviewee 4)⁶². The EU is 'the economic power that unites the most developed countries of the European part of Eurasia' (Interviewee 8).⁶³ Cooperation and coordination of economic efforts of the EU members, free movement of goods, services and capital was mentioned as the benefit of the EU among other poles of international relations.

The EU was called 'the one of the world's largest economic centers along with the US and China' (Interviewee 7). As media representative emphasized the role of euro that allows the EU being a second pole of power: '...euro is a significant enough thing that does not allow the dollar to take leadership positions completely, to be above everyone' (Interviewee 8). A common view amongst the interviewees was that high standards of living and huge market associate with the economic power and EU's attractiveness.

Concerning the specific images of the EU, the EU is perceived as a leader in technologies. The extract from the business elite interviewee below reaffirms it. 'The West has high-level technologies of oil refining and obtaining high-quality gasoline, processing of agricultural products, flattering industry, grain etc.' (Interviewee 14).⁶⁴ Agriculture was also covered as an interesting case of the Netherlands by another business representative. They put multi-level greenhouses with the use of LED lamps and super-sophisticated technologies. 'Can you

⁶¹ "система квот, в результате чего традиционные отрасли экономики некоторых новых стран ЕС оказались в кризисной ситуации." (Interviewee 10)

⁶² "Jeto lokomotiv mirovogo jekonomicheskogo razvitija." (Interviewee 4)

⁶³ "Jeto jekonomicheskaja sila, ob"edinjajushhaja samye razvitye strany evropejskoj chasti Evrazii." (Interviewee 8)

⁶⁴ "Na Zapade vysokij uroven' tehnologij neftepererabotki i poluchenija vysokokachestvennogo benzina, pererabotki sel'skohozjajstvennoj produkcii, leshhej promyshlennosti, zerna i t.d." (Interviewee 14)

imagine? There is a groundless cultivation, where only water instead of soil' (Interviewee 12).⁶⁵ An example of the EU's leadership in the field of green energy was presented by the independent researcher.

A good gesture when Trump announced the abolition of subsidies for scientists who were engaged in 'green research', Macron invited scientists to the EU countries. This characterizes the region as open to innovative projects. (Interviewee 2)⁶⁶

The economic assistance of the less developed countries was mentioned rarely. The focus was more on the experience of the EU in technological sphere due to competitiveness which leads to increased efficiency of the companies, high level of production, well-developed infrastructure, and high quality services.

6.2.5. Norm-setting

A variety of perspectives were expressed regarding the EU *as a normative actor* and *norm-setter*. The themes of the EU's norms and values as supported and criticized recurred throughout the interviews' dataset. The majority of the interviewees mentioned they would like to see the EU acting as a normative power in Kazakhstan but at this point there is not much that the EU can do due to the local political conditions.

In general, the EU norms were referred to as universal values but with its own specificity and right vector for the future (LGBT rights is the topic under debates). The idea is that a special attitude to human life is the most important value for Europe and the norms and values of the second order develop from the basic value.

According to the collected data, in the most cases the EU is portrayed as an entity acting in accordance with the established principles, norms and values. 'Norms and values - this is what makes the European Union a European Union' (Interviewee 4).⁶⁷ The EU is seen as leading by an example:

⁶⁵ "Vy mozhete sebe predstavit'? Sushhestvuet bespochvennoe vyrashhivanie, gde tol'ko voda vmesto pochvyju" (Interviewee 12)

⁶⁶ "Horoshij zhest, kogda Tramp ob"javil otmeny dotacij dlja uchenyh, kotorye zanimalis' 'green research', Makron priglasil uchenyh v strany ES. Jeto harakteriziruet region kak otkrytyj dlja innovacionnyh proektov." (Interviewee 2)

⁶⁷ "Normy i cennosti - jeto to, chto delaet Evropejskij Sojuz Evropejskim Sojuzom." (Interviewee 4)

The EU ensures the overwhelming majority of human rights and freedoms, [...] What seriously distinguishes the EU from America, which actively promotes rights and freedoms globally, is that the US is not always exemplary in all spheres. The EU as a later design, managed to absorb almost all liberal values and there is a sufficiently large number of the EU members where most of these rights and freedoms are very strictly followed. (Interviewee 7)⁶⁸

Essentially, in terms of democratic values and the rule of law the EU as an institution has been described as ‘power for good’ for those ‘newcomers’ which still should learn from more experienced members in order to reach the standards (e.g. Interviewee 8). Notion of personal freedom and its resonance with the European society made a contribution to the vision of the EU as not only exporting norms but also implementing them within the EU.

The freedom of another person, and the right to self-expression, to one’s views and beliefs creates the platform for the development of pluralism in society, intellectual competition. Observance of norms, rules and regulations are adopted in the society. (Interviewee 9)⁶⁹

If a person suffers from the actions of an official, then if he is sued by law enforcement agencies, public opinion may stand up for him, and this often leads to a preponderance of public opinion. (Interviewee 16)

Freedom of speech was a special norm or standard introduced by all media elite representatives. As one interviewee put it: ‘For example, one of the first impressions is in Lithuania, a huge amount of media, what is pluralism, freedom of speech, how it all works’ (Interviewee 3).⁷⁰

However, the migration crisis in terms of norm-setting has been discussed critically. While media and business elite representatives mostly criticized migration policy by calling the EU’s behavior towards refugees as an ‘incorrect’, experts tend to highlight the positive side of the EU acting in accordance with its norms. For instance, one of the foreign policy experts claimed: ‘Always when I am asked about the inefficiency of migration policy, I say that no, it is just an indication that Germany follows the basic values, the values of Europe, which are unshakable’

⁶⁸ “ES imenno udalos' voplotit' v real'nost', obespechit' podavljajushhee bol'shinstvo prav i svobod cheloveka, v toj ili inoj stepeni v zavisimosti ot strany. Esli brat' v celom po ES, chto ser'ezno otlichaet ES ot Ameriki, kotoraja dostatochno aktivno prodvigaet prava i svobody global'no, no opjat'-taki, sami ne vseгда javljajutsja obrazcom dlja podrazhanija vo vseh sferah.” (Interviewee 7)

⁶⁹ “Ponjatie svobody drugogo cheloveka, i pravo na samovyrazhenie, na sobstvennye vzglyady i ubezhdenija sposobstvuet razvitiyu pljuralizma v obshhestve, intellektual'noj konkurencii. Sobljudenie norm, pravil i porjadkov, prinjatyh v obshhestve.” (Interviewee 9)

⁷⁰ “Naprimen, odno iz pervyh vpechatlenij - v Litve, ogromnoe kolichestvo SMI, chto takoe pljuralizm, svoboda slova, kak vse jeto rabotaet.” (Interviewee 3)

(Interviewee 11).⁷¹ As an exception, success of the migration policy before the migration crisis was also noticed by media representative: 'I was very touched by the way [EU members] try to make comfortable conditions for labor migrants, refugees, being comfortable to exist with these cultural values' (Interviewee 3).⁷² To sum it up, 'Europe will no longer be Europe if it ceases to provide assistance and support people from any region of the globe' (Interviewee 11).⁷³

The EU was called as 'a global leader in moral policy' with high standards: 'those standards that are laid out by the EU, the countries that make up its backbone, they are for many states a kind of big beacon: social, political, human rights' (Interviewee 4)⁷⁴. Moreover, the EU is described as an attractive pole not only for the potential EU-members, since 'some countries do not even dream of joining the EU, but are developing their countries in the likenesses (ibid.)⁷⁵. Norms were described as 'a significant force of the EU' (Interviewee 15)⁷⁶.

The majority of the elites' representatives mentioned *the EU as 'a beacon', Europe setting the tone globally, regionally* and the context of Kazakhstan to a certain degree. The most attention was paid to the human rights, the rule of law, and less attention was given to the sustainable development. Next, liberty, democracy, social solidarity and tolerance were discussed as norms constituting the EU's internal politics. However, democracy was also covered in terms of applicability in Kazakhstan. In addition, the importance of liberty and freedoms was discussed mainly in the European context.

'The EU is a leading center that promotes such values as human rights, the rule of law, and the protection of the environment. The EU standards are still ahead. Other countries tend to be the

⁷¹ "Vsegda kogda menja sprashivajut naschet nejeffektivnosti migracionnoj politiki, to ja govorju, chto net, jeto kak raz-taki pokazatel' togo, chto Germanija sleduet tem bazovym cennostjam, cennostjam Evropy, kotorye javljajutsja nezyblemymi." (Interviewee 11)

⁷² "Menja ochen' tronulo to, kak oni pytajutsja sozdat' uslovija dlja komfortnogo sosushhestvovanija trudovyh immigrantov, bezhencev s jetimi kul'turnymi cennostjami." (Interviewee 3)

⁷³ "Evropa perestanet byt' Evropoj, esli ona perestanet okazivat' pomoshh' i podderzhku naseleniju, ljudjam iz ljubogo regiona zemnogo shara." (Interviewee 11)

⁷⁴ "global'nyj lider v moral'noj politike... Te standarty, kotorye založeny ES, stranami, kotorye sostavljajut ee kostjak, oni javljajutsja dlja mnogih gosudarstv svoeobraznym bol'shim majakom: social'nye, politicheskie, prava cheloveka." (Interviewee 4)

⁷⁵ "nekotorye strany, kotorye dazhe ne mechtajut okazat'sja v ES, no razvivajut svoi strany po podobiju" (ibid.)

⁷⁶ "znachimaja sila ES" (Interviewee 15)

same' (Interviewee 5).⁷⁷ Regarding human rights, 'there are novels that are outstanding and not amenable to revision' (Interviewee 4).⁷⁸ Rarely, human rights applicability was discussed in relation to Kazakhstan. To illustrate, the death penalty has not been abolished in Kazakhstan yet and NGOs and civil society representatives are trying to persuade the government to abolish it. As one civil society representative noted:

It is very important on whose experience we can rely. There is a wonderful example of the EU, which says that the death penalty is definitely not applied. Human life is inviolable. This is the value on which the EU was built. A very telling example. (Interviewee 7)⁷⁹

Interestingly, the promotion of the EU's norms and values sometimes has been associated with the 'soft power'. 'Respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to the minorities is the soft power of the EU' (Interviewee 10).⁸⁰

Local resonance is visible to some extent. As NGO representative pointed out 'when there is some comparison of political, economic, social indicators, the image of the EU arises, a priori' (Interviewee 7).⁸¹ Another foreign policy expert even directly commented on the acceptance of the EU's norms:

In the field of the rule of law, tolerance, equality of rights for all citizens, certain democratic principles, principles of economic development - the desire for these standards (the desire to implement) is a certain 'norm' for Kazakhstan. (Interviewee 15)⁸²

The interviewees acknowledged that Kazakhstan definitely has something to learn from the EU regarding democracy and freedom of speech. Some experts acknowledged that the EU is the only motivation to match the world's model of the economy and society in general (e.g. Interviewee 13, Interviewee 8). Thus, Kazakhstan wants to introduce English law within the

⁷⁷ "ES - liderujushhij centr, kotoryj prodvigaet takie cennosti kak prava cheloveka, verhovenstvo zakona, zashhita okružhajushhej sredy. Drugie strany stremjatsja byt' takimi zhe." (Interviewee 5)

⁷⁸ "est' novelly, kotorye vydajushhiesja i ne poddajushhiesja peresmotra" (Interviewee 4)

⁷⁹ "Zdes' ochen' vazhno na chej opyt my mozhem otsylat'sja. Est' zamechatel'nyj primer ES, kotoryj govorit, chto smertnaja kazn' odnoznachno ne primenjaetsja. Zhizn' cheloveka – neprikosnovenna. Jeto ta cennost', na kotoroj byl postroen ES. Ochen' govorjashhij primer." (Interviewee 7)

⁸⁰ "V ES jeto uvazhenie chelovecheskogo dostoinstva, svobody, demokratii, ravenstva, verhovenstva zakona i uvazhenija prav cheloveka, vključaja prava lic, prinadležashhij k men'shinstvam. Da, jeto mjagkaja sila ES." (Interviewee 10)

⁸¹ "Dazhe kogda idet kakoe-to sopostavlenie političeskij, jekonomičeskij, social'nyh indikatorov, to voznikaet obraz ES, apriori." (Interviewee 7)

⁸² "V oblasti verhovenstva zakona, tolerantnosti, ravenstva prav dlja vsech grazhdan, opredelennye demokratičeskie principy, principy jekonomičeskogo razvitija – stremlenie k jetim standartam (zhelanie vnedrit') jeto opredelennaja «norma» dlja Kazahstana." (Interviewee 15)

framework of the International Financial Center (Interviewee 16). As one of the interviewees put it the EU is actively helping to reform the system of justice. EU representatives in Kazakhstan are now 'holding various meetings, trainings, conferences with us and Kazakhstan is happy to accept this assistance' (Interviewee 5)⁸³.

European education is also a sphere which can be discussed under the term of norm-setting. For example, the fact that Kazakhstan has entered the Bologna Process of education and youth striving to study in Europe were mentioned by the decent amount of the interviewees. 'Tendencies are positive: there is a construction of the new elite among the younger generation for European values, given the large number of visiting teachers' (Interviewee 2).⁸⁴ Technologies and standards in economic sphere are also subjects wanted for transferability into Kazakhstan.

A common view amongst the interviewees was that the *European Union serves a model for integration* in many regions and the EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union) in particular. Talking about this issue, expert from the public sector said: 'The idea of the EU creation is already a huge contribution. The whole world is trying to test this model. In the Asian world, Southeast Asia. It is difficult to repeat' (Interviewee 5)⁸⁵. Another foreign policy expert when asked about strong sides of the EU said:

It must be said that the Kazakhstani political elite often returns to the experience of the EU when analyzing the processes of the Eurasian integration. Even the fact that we are now creating the EAEU, to some extent, the EU is a reference point and a model for us. (Interviewee 11)⁸⁶

Since interviews are ambivalent by its nature, there is always a fly in the ointment. The EU's normative constituent (internal politics) was *criticized* by several interviewees. To begin with, the EU's normative power has been put under the question. 'Regarding the articulated values of the European Union, they are still turned inward. Outwardly, this is what makes the powers

⁸³ "Oni provodjat sejchas s nami razlichnogo roda vstrechi, treningi, konferencii. I Kazahstan s udovol'stvиеm prinimaet jetu pomoshh'." (Interviewee 5)

⁸⁴ "Tendencii polozhitel'nye – proishodit stroitel'stvo novoj jelity sredi podrastajushhego pokolenija na evropejskikh cennostej, uchityvaja bol'shoe kolichestvo priezzhih prepodavatelej." (Interviewee 2)

⁸⁵ "Vo vsem mire pytajutsja aprobirovat' jeto model'. V aziatskom mire, v osobennosti. Jugo-Vostochnaja Azija. Slozno povtorit'." (Interviewee 5)

⁸⁶ "Nado skazat', chto i kazahstanskaja politicheskaja jelita dostatochno chasto vozvrashhaetsja k opytu ES, kogda analizirujutsja processy Evrazijskoj integracii. Dazhe to, chto my sejchas sozdaem EAJeS, jeto v opredelennoj stepeni model' ES." (Interviewee 11)

a power, their interests dominant, prevailing' (Interviewee 4).⁸⁷ These norms are not the only one and the EU is rarely seen being active protecting and defending its own norms in the world politics (external politics).

Catalonian case and refugees' crisis showed that European democracy has its own problems and is far from 'normal'. The refugee situation has shown that 'European democracy is to some extent limited by security considerations'⁸⁸ (Interviewee 6). When the EU opposed the recognition of Catalonia, one more limitation of European democracy has been added, 'which is sometimes served as the only unique reference point for all' (Interviewee 6)⁸⁹.

In some cases, the EU's attitude to the less-developed countries, for instance, post-USSR region, has been described as arrogant, 'swagger' or even 'hypocrite'. When the EU due to its habits living by these norms and values, it begins to believe that all other countries are ready for this, fit and should live in accordance with those norms. As NGO representative stated in a metaphorical way,

There is a disease that you get in childhood, scarlet fever, measles, for example. A person who is 60 years old should not tell a child, that well, that measles only, I have lived my life, I have never been sick. So, it is impossible, it does not happen after all. It should not be that way when you go through some stages, then you are automatically entitled to the right or you have the right to dictate it to others. (Interviewee 4)⁹⁰

In terms of the attachment to Kazakhstan, LGBT rights is a highly disputable field, rejected by the interviewees. As one of the experts put it

The destructive side of the EU and the whole of European modern civilization is the de facto rejection of the traditional values of the family, indulging the sexual minorities in the name of falsely understood ideals of democracy. (Interviewee 1)⁹¹

⁸⁷ "Chto kasaetsja artikulirovannyh cennostej ES, oni po-prezhnemu napravleny vovnutr'. Vovne – to, chto delaet derzhavy derzhavami, ih interesy preobladajushhimi, dovlejushhimi." (Interviewee 4)

⁸⁸ "Evropejskaja demokratija v nekotoryj stepeni ogranichena soobrazhenijami bezopasnosti." (Interviewee 6)

⁸⁹ "kotoraja inogda podaetsja kak edinstvennyj unikal'nyj orientir dlja vseh" (Interviewee 6)

⁹⁰ "est' bolezni, kotoroj bolejut v detstve, skarlatina, kor', naprimer. Chelovek, kotoromu 60 let ne dolzhen skazat' rebenku, da ne, nu chto kor', ja-to prozhil svoju zhizn', ni razu ne bolel. Tak nel'zja, tak ne byvaet ved'. Nel'zja, kogda ty prohodish' nekotorye jetapy, to ty avtomaticheski nadelen pravom ili imeesh' pravo diktovat' jeto drugim." (Interviewee 4)

⁹¹ "Gubitel'noj storonoj ES i vsej evropejskoj sovremennoj civilizacii schitaju fakticheskij otkaz ot tradicionnyh cennostej sem'i, potkanie seksual'nym men'shinstvam vo imja lozhno ponjatyh idealov demokratii." (Interviewee 1)

Media representative even noticed that ‘the infringement of gender rights is already equated with Nazism and it comes to the point of absurdity’ (Interviewee 13)⁹². Some experts said that maybe it means the paramount problems and needs are already satisfied to such an extent that the EU became “too spoiled”. Gay parades, LGBT communities are incomprehensible for Kazakhstani mindset: same-sex marriages are not norms because life can stop there (e.g. Interviewee 13, Interviewee 14).

Unfortunately, the EU’s promotion of norms is inert. Even when it comes to promoting European ideology, the EU simply proposes patterns of behavior, does not take into account what norms in society are acceptable, without any binding and adaptation to the values and traditions of the locals. As media expert noted ‘in the whole world now there is a wave of fighting with [sexual] harassment. In the Kazakh society, it is perceived as a joke’ (interviewee 9)⁹³.

Not always European institutions conducting here some kind of cultural, enlightening, propaganda work, competently select agents of influence.

Often, they trust marginal individuals who are not trusted in the community, who are not considered to be worthy of behavior. An example is the feminist movement “Do not be silent”. The EU needs to consider how to convey the values to the local population so that they do not cause rejection. (Interviewee 9)⁹⁴

The interviewees expressed doubts concerning the applicability of the NPE to the local context, especially the extent to which some of norms can be applied and their effectiveness. ‘Some models accepted, but I would not say that they are fully implemented in our society’ (interviewee 16)⁹⁵. The majority of the interviewees expressed their regret about a less active position of the EU in Kazakhstan regarding the human rights and democracy in comparison with the times when Kazakhstan was a chairman of the OSCE in 2010.

⁹² “Ushhemlenie gendernyh prav uzhe priravnivaetsja k nacizmu. Dohodit do absurda.” (Interviewee 13)

⁹³ “Vo vsem mire sejchas volna bor'by s harrasment. V kazahskom obshhestve jeto vosprinimaetsja s jumorom.” (Interviewee 9)

⁹⁴ “Chasto doverjajut marginal'nym lichnostjam, kotorym v obshhestve ne doverjajut, kotorye ne rassmatrivajutsja kak dostojnye obrazcy povedenija. Primer feministskoe dvizhenie «Ne molchi». Nuzhno obdumyvajut kak donesti cennosti do mestnogo naselenija, chtoby oni ne vyzvali ottorzhenija.” (Interviewee 9)

⁹⁵ “Kakie-to modeli berutsja, no ja by ne skazal, chto oni polnocenno rabotajut v nashem obshhestve.” (Interviewee 16)

Some experts, media elite and civil society representative expressed an opinion that the EU behavior in Kazakhstan is a bit hypocritical. In other words, ‘nodding on everything and pretending there are no problems in Kazakhstan with democracy and standards should be not an option for the EU’ (Interviewee 4).⁹⁶ The EU is perceived as behaving against its norms when not reporting on flaws of the political regime and not reacting on worsening situation with the freedom of speech (media freedom).

6.3. Discussion

To answer my research questions which are aiming to describe how the EU is perceived in Kazakhstan and in particularly in terms of normative power and to answer what images are dominant in Kazakhstani discourse (mass media materials and author-conducted interviews), multilayered analysis was applied to this study. In order to find perceptions of different layers of the Kazakhstani elite I have gathered and analyzed data from two main sources: mass media and interviews conducted by myself. However, as part of the preliminary analysis I noticed that there were no major differences between different layers of the elite – media, academic, business and civil society, but the differences were between the perceptions given in public, i.e. in the media, and in perceptions that I draw from the interviews conducted by myself with representatives of different layers of the elite. Therefore, in this section, I compare and summarize findings from both mass media and interview analyses, and proceed with the evaluation of this study in comparison to the results of the EU external perceptions on local and global scale and theoretical considerations.

Talking about EU’s perception in terms of the EU-Kazakhstani relations, in both mass media and interviews, the EU is steadily portrayed as an important trade partner and an investor. These images were also allocated in previous research done by Peyrouse (2014) where he emphasized EU’s investments role and Ospanova et.al. (2016; 2017) where authors mentioned the rise of mutual trade interests: from the side of the EU Kazakhstan became the most valuable trade partner in CA region, while for Kazakhstan the importance of the EU lays in the biggest trade turnover. Certainly, perceptions of the EU as a trading partner of Kazakhstan is in accordance with the same prevailing perceptions among the most of the EU’s Strategic Partners, namely,

⁹⁶ “kivat’ na vse i pritvorjat’sja, chto v Kazahstane net problem s demokratiej i standartami ne dolzhno byt’ ne variantom dlja ES.” (Interviewee 4)

Canada, China, India, Russia, Brazil, Japan, Mexico, South Africa and South Korea (Barcevičius et al. 2015)

One of the commonalities in mass media materials and interview findings is the perception that the issues of trade, investment, tourism and education affect Kazakhstan more than the development of democratic institutions, justice, law and order. In relations with Kazakhstan, the EU is particularly perceived as a political partner to a lesser extent than economic partner. These perceptions are consistent with those detected by Peyrouse. His argument is that 'the EU is perceived as having substantial economic leverage, but barely any political clout' among Kazakh elites (Peyrouse, 2014, 7). However, growing mutual interest in development of political connections transmitted through the Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement.

Nonetheless, there are some dissimilarities, mostly expressed in the absence of the information in public materials (mass media) but articulated in personal communication (interviews) and vice versa. Thereby, the EU is seen as a distant partner by the interviewees who even expressed their concern about the EU actually needing Kazakhstan. Another peculiarity is neglecting of the EU's presence in Central Asia region in interviews and coverage of this topic in media messages.

The significance of the bilateral diplomatic relations with the EU was highlighted in media and interviews context which supports the findings of the media analysis and discourse analysis conducted by Ospanova et al. (2016; 2017). Regarding mass media perceptions, EU's is seen negatively rather than positively with the only exception in EU-Kazakhstan/ CA cooperation what goes against the previous findings when the EU was pictured rather positively overall (Ospanova et al., 2016, 84-85; Ospanova et.al, 2017). Overall, changes of mass media perception of the EU-related publications, news without local 'hook', towards a more negative side proves that perceptions are issue-specific (Chaban et.al. 2013) and time-specific (Didelon-Loiseau & Grasland, 2014). However, positive perception of the EU-Kazakhstan/ CA relations creates a contradictory portrait of the EU. These findings are continuity of the previous results in mass media analysis:

Publications devoted to the internal dynamics of the EU tend to produce confusing image of the significant player of international affairs struggling to overcome serious economic crisis, and therefore declining, the EU-Kazakhstan interaction remains to be portrayed in positive connotation. (Ospanova et al., 2017)

There could be an explanation of that predisposed in the introduction where I argued that recent events such as Brexit, Ukrainian case, the migration crisis and rise of populist movements might have affected the perception of the EU in Kazakhstan. Even these events affected perceptions of the EU as a global actor it went aside the EU-Kazakhstan collaboration.

Issues of *internal security* were especially emphasized in media materials with negative connotation in relation to migration crisis. While in interviews different groups of elites mostly discussed *security* in terms of *foreign policy*. The EU army and defense policy was covered differently even contradictory to each other by mass media and interviews. If mass media sources portrayed the EU aiming for militarization, the interviewees outlined the EU's weakness, inability to decide on their own supranational European defense structures and forces and criticized for the military dependency from the US.

Internal politics and domestic issues have been discussed negatively both in media and interviews. The current study found that the EU is portrayed as a construction in crisis with a low efficiency that needs reconfiguration. Mass media framed the EU from the Euroskeptic position. To put in the other words, the EU is pictured coming to the end of its existence. By contrast, the interviewees mostly supported Anglo-Saxon tradition that this is not the end of the EU and there will be many situations that will check the EU for durability. Nonetheless, at this point, the current circumstances, mentioned in all data (Brexit, migration crisis, rise of right-wing political moods) are winning the EU over.

In addition, one of the strongest perceptions visible in both mass media and interviews is a lack of the EU's internal unity, 'polyphony' which affects foreign policy and economic relations. The present findings seem to be consistent with other research of the EU perceptions in the Pacific, Southeast Asia and Africa which found the EU's 'inability to speak with a single voice' as a negative perception of the EU leadership (Chaban et. al. 2013, 446).

As it was noted in the findings' section, migration crisis and its outcome is one of the most visible topic in mass media presented negatively. It can be said that representatives of the elite are also more critical than supportive of the EU's migration policy. Thus, the EU is seen to be handling this situation badly.

Another important finding was that in terms of foreign policy the EU is portrayed as a one of the leaders in the world community and an entity sustaining *peace* despite the EU does not

have a common view on the external politics. Moreover, interviews highlight EU's specifics as a one of a kind foreign policy actor (integration), balance-keeper, peace-promoter and diplomatic actor. Thus, the thesis of the EU's 'distinctiveness' (Lucarelli 2007) in the world politics is supported by the research conducted. Elites' opinion was divided on those who believe that the EU is a sort of counterpart to the US and those who believe that the EU is the US' marionette. This could be explained by several factors influencing elite's vision among which are their belonging to the government-oriented organizations and/ or supporting pro-Russian views since some of the interviewees mentioned that they are reading some Russian internet-sources. Further research should be done to investigate the reason behind the ambivalent views in this particular area. Nonetheless, former finding of the EU's perception in Kazakhstan as a counterpart to the US goes in agreement with Lucarelli and Fioramonti (2009, 338) finding 'the EU as a (possible) counterbalance to the US hegemony'.

One unanticipated finding was that the EU's economy is assessed negatively in media. Even high social development and high living standards were presented in negative connotation due to effects of migration crisis, not to mention on-going economic crisis in Eurozone (as stated in media). Likewise, elites underlined the EU's problematic economic situation, namely, debt crisis and economic imbalance, large economic gap between the EU members. Surprisingly, despite information mentioned above, the EU is still proclaimed as an 'economic power' (see Elgström & Chaban 2014, 185). Such images as locomotive of the world economic development, the world's largest economic center, having an enormous potential are present in elites' discourse. These results match those observed in earlier studies conducted internationally when the EU's economic power is a dominant image (Lucarelli 2007, 265; Chaban et al. 2013, 443–4; Olivier and Fioramonti 2010, 116; Elgström & Chaban 2014, 185; Ospanova et al., 2017).

Importantly, this research indirectly contributes to the external perceptions of the EU leadership. In mass media the EU has not been presented as a leader. Similarly, there is no perception of the EU as an ultimate leader in the vision of the elites rather the EU is seen as one of the leaders balancing in multi-polar world or a leader to some extent or in certain areas, for instance, 'global leader in moral politics'.

The present study was designed to determine whether the NPE concept is applicable to the perception of the EU in Kazakhstan. Very little was found in the literature on the question of

Kazakhstani assessment of the EU norms and values. For instance, Ospanova et.al. (2017, 81) on the base of mass media analysis made a conclusion that ‘the EU officials largely fail to communicate Union’s values and its policy in the region to wider public in the country’.

Undoubtedly, normative discussion is present in both mass media materials and author-conducted interviews. The analysis part provided the largest set of significant features of the NPE in Kazakhstani view.

The analysis of mass media revealed that the EU is rather portrayed as a normative actor than norm-setter. The perception of the EU as a normative actor is ambivalent in both sources public data and interviews conducted with Kazakhstani elites’ perception because in some cases, for instance, Catalonia, the migration crisis, the EU is criticized for not following its own democratic principles. However, the EU is rarely but seen as a ‘standard’-setter in agriculture, food standards, education and technological standards within the EU-Kazakhstan/ Central Asia framework. Similarly, the interviewees have identified agriculture, education and technologies transfer as spheres in which Kazakhstan is following or planning to follow the EU. In reviewing the literature, no data was found on the association between European education and norm-setting in Strategic Partners’ views (50). While the interviewees mentioned Kazakhstan joining the Bologna Process, which is according to my typology is acceptance of the EU’s norms, likewise, this can be an example of ‘adoption’ (Björkdal et.al. 2015) of this specific norm by Kazakhstan.

Normative dialogue between the EU and Kazakhstan/ CA region is barely visible both in mass media and interviews. If in public data (mass media) the EU is portrayed as an active norm-sender in EU-Kazakhstan cooperation, while the interviewees saw a decline in EU’s activity and interest in promotion of norms in Kazakhstan. This rather contradictory result may be due to absence of the political elites among interviewees. Another explanation is that media sources chosen are government-oriented and political authorities are aiming at showing the EU that Kazakhstan is ready at least for nominal communication in sphere of democracy and human rights, because Kazakh authorities care about external image of Kazakhstan in the eyes of the EU. As the interviewees concluded, ‘the EU is the only validation for Kazakhstani political authorities’.

Overall, such norms as rule of law, human rights and sustainable development are supported by the interviewees and presented in positive light in the EU-Kazakhstan/ CA dialogue in mass

media. Notwithstanding, LGBT rights is a highly debatable issue among interviewees and salient topic in media messages. Therefore, this norm unlikely will be accepted in the near future in Kazakhstan. If we look through the novel conceptual paradigm from the prospective of norm-takers (Björkdal et al. 2015), this norm is clearly placed into ‘rejection’.

Another important difference observed between personal communication findings (interviews) and public data findings (mass media) that the EU is seen as a desired global norm-setter and/or normative leader by the interviewees but not even mentioned in mass media. Representation of the EU being a ‘beacon’, ‘setting tone globally’, ‘a priori reference mark’ for Kazakhstan without persistent and active policy from the EU side supports Manners’ argument the ‘most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says but what it is’ (Manners, 2002, 252). Some Kazakh elites I interviewed perceive the EU as ‘power for good’ and Kazakhstan being far away from these standards by default. It is important to note the EU as a normative actor or having normative influence within Kazakhstan is seen less, but rather the interviewees talked about its influence regionally and globally. Nonetheless, the EU was described as a weak defender of its norms on the international arena. As one civil society representative said, ‘good must be with fists; it is not enough to stand and do nothing to protect your vision in the international arena’.

Undoubtedly, regional integration of the EU is a model for Kazakhstan in terms of CA integrational projects and the EAEU. It is visible in mass media and interviewees perceptions. However, Brexit had an impact on the perception of the EU as a perfect integration and some flaws and fragility of integrational project emerged. In general, the image of the EU as a unique integrational project, which Kazakhstan is ready to imitate and follow its guidelines, still prevails. One can call it successful manifestation of the NPE and norm-setting. Thus, from the point of view of norm-receiver (Kazakhstan), imitation of the institutions is visible through ‘adaptation’ (Björkdal et al. 2015).

Sometimes, the promotion of the EU’s norms and values has been associated with the ‘soft power’ among interviewees. It is encouraging to compare this finding with that found by Chaban et.al. (2013, 434-5, 439) who found that ‘the EU’s normative influence is associated with soft power’.

One specific finding in stakeholders’ interviews is that European norms’ and values’ success is considered as the outcome of the European long historical path and associated with lifestyle

and prestigious inner culture developed from 'liberal thought'. To some degree, this finding is supported by Keene's statement on creation and promotion of civilizational standard against 'barbarism' in the past:

One reason for the relatively high prestige that attaches to the EU's "normative difference" in international relations today is that it still draws on the legacy created in the nineteenth century (Keene, forthcoming, p. 13 as cited in Larsen, 2014, 899).

With regard to the EU norms implementation in Kazakhstan, the interviewees expressed their concern about possibilities of the implementation or effective pursuit of these norms at the state of the art even some steps in jurisdiction system, human rights discussion and creation of organized civil society were already done. There are several reasons for that. First, political system will not allow these norms to be fulfilled because it will put authorities in danger. Second, the EU is criticized for trusting marginal personalities in promotion of European norms and not taking into account local customs and traditions. In the other words, the EU is missing the context. Third, according to the interviewees, the EU is slowing down its activity in the normative area. Moreover, there is no reaction of the EU visible on worsening situation of media freedom. Fourth, stakeholders expressed their opinion that Kazakhstani public has lack of awareness about the EU.

According to the results of the research, some *recommendations* potentially could be applied for the improvement of the EU-Kazakhstan relations in the future and increase awareness of Kazakhstani society about the EU. These recommendations will most likely make an impact on the EU-Kazakhstan normative dialogue too.

First of all, the majority of the interviewees raised visa issues as their main concern in the EU-Kazakhstan relations. As one of the media elite said: 'simplification of visa regime would be of a great help to intensify relations in sphere of tourism, which in turn would simplify personal contacts of citizens' (Interviewee 3)⁹⁷. Business representatives highlighted difficulties of entering the EU area: 'There is no problem to travel to China or Russia, but there is a line of issues you should solve before going to Europe. Once people visit European countries, take

⁹⁷ "Uproshhenie vizovogo rezhima bylo by bol'shoj pomoshh'ju dlja aktivizacii otnoshenij v sfere turizma, chto, v svoju ochered', uprostilo by lichnye kontakty grazhdan." (Interviewee 3)

over their experience, communicate, they are building closer relations between countries and people' (Interviewee 14)⁹⁸.

Regarding educational programs, media elite mentioned that NGOs and various Funds should organize trips to Europe for the members of the governmental organizations to show how people live there and what we can learn from them. Also, some experts expressed the wish to return to the level of intensive educational exchange programs for the University students as it was before the crisis.

Several experts and media elite noticed that rarely you can find news about the EU and EU related topics in Russian which would be presented purely by the EU side. It leads to potential problem for those who does not know any foreign languages, for example, in Kazakhstani society.

It would be great if the EU could organize some Russian-language channel for the Russian-speaking space. Regarding the fact that Euronews introduced the Russian version recently, 20% of it turned out to be owned by Russian television. It would not hurt to have an EU channel, at least on the Internet, and not on the air television, to have the news about the EU covered by itself. (Interviewee 8)⁹⁹

Civil society representative and foreign policy experts suggested that Kazakhstan needs a new level of state program 'The Path to Europe' – 'The Path to Europe 2'. 'The top of diplomatic victories would be the involvement of Kazakhstan in the Council of Europe' – he said (Interviewee 4)¹⁰⁰. He also put forward an idea that it would be reasonable to invest in technologies, education in exchange for political reforms:

If the EU would say, that Kazakhstan is slowly moving in the right direction, follows some recommendations, and that is why, the EU is ready to invest in budgets or to help in agricultural sphere. Conditions are the following: we let you join the Council of Europe, we develop a roadmap and then Kazakhstan follows it. Would you agree? (ibid.)¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ "Net nikakih problem s poezdnoj v Kitaj ili Rossiju, no pered poezdnoj v Evropu neobhodimo reshit' rjad voprosov. Kogda ljudi poseshajut evropejskie strany, berut na sebja svoj opyt, obshhajutsja, strojat bolee tesnye otnoshenija mezhdru stranami i ljud'mi." (Interviewee 14)

⁹⁹ "Bylo by zdorovo, esli by ES mog organizovat' kanal russkojazychnogo russkojazychnogo prostranstva. Chto kasaetsja togo, chto Euronews nedavno predstavila rossijskuju versiju, 20% iz nih okazalis' v sobstvennosti rossijskogo televidenija. Ne pomeshalo by imet' kanal ES, po krajnej mere, v Internet, a ne v jefire, chtoby poluchat' novosti o ES, kotorye .sozdany im zhe" (Interviewee 8)

¹⁰⁰ "Verhom diplomaticheskikh pobed stalo by vovlechenit Kazahstana v Sovet Evropy." (Interviewee 4)

¹⁰¹ "Esli ES skazhet, chto Kazahstan medlenno dvizhetsja v pravil'nom napravlenii, sleduet nekotorym rekomendacijam, i pojetomu ES gotov investirovat' v bjudzhety ili pomoch' v sel'skohozjajstvennoj sfere. Uslovija

The presence of the EU in the CA region and in the country, is vitally important, because for Kazakhstan this is the only motivation to match the world model of the economy, social development and democratic standards. Perhaps, the EU should revise its attitude towards Kazakhstan and to enhance especially at the time of the transit of power. Most respondents believe that with any transit of power, the importance of cooperation with the EU would arise in times and the acceptance of the EU's normative influence would increase respectively.

In short, changes of the Kazakhstani perceptions of the EU towards negativity observed in this thesis may influence not only future relations between Kazakhstan and the European Union, but also it can possibly lead to the rejection of the EU norms. All things considered, events such as the Eurozone crisis, the migration crisis, the Ukrainian case, Brexit and rise of the right-wing political parties served a cause for negative evaluations of the EU politics and economy in mass media and interviews. It seems that recent crises caused elusive negative changes on the EU-Kazakhstan relations. Although these events caused damage to the EU normative profile and undermined the authority of the EU as a norm-setter. For instance, the norm of the European integration which was accepted/ adapted by Kazakhstan is put into consideration with some caution and lessons to be learnt.

To conclude, we cannot talk about an ultimate normative power of the EU in Kazakhstan but one cannot deny the importance of findings in this research (normative influence) which does not let us to make an opposite claim. Rather we should consider the EU's normative influence being stronger or weaker in certain areas presented by certain norms and to a certain degree. A range of views on the EU's normative messages, reporting critical attitude (rejection and resistance), as well as support/ approval (adoption and adaption) are visible in Kazakhstani perceptions.

zakljuchajutsja v sledujushhem: my razreshaem vam prisoedinit'sja k Sovetu Evropy, my razrabatyvaem «dorozhnuju kartu», a zatem Kazahstan sleduet za nej. Soglasites'?" (Interviewee 4)

7. CONCLUSION

In this study, the aim was to examine how the EU was perceived in Kazakhstan by looking at what images of the EU are dominant in Kazakhstani elite. In addition, I demonstrated my interest in whether the EU is perceived as the NPE. I also intend to show whether there were differences in Kazakhstani perceptions between media and author-conducted interviews with different groups of elites. The present study was designed with a focus on the series of challenges the EU has recently faced.

The empirical findings of this study provide a new understanding of the EU external perception in Kazakhstan. This is the first study that reports on Kazakhstani perceptions after the series of crises that have shaken the EU. The present study confirms previous findings of the research conducted globally by external perceptions scholars and contributes additional evidence that suggests the EU is still observed as an economic power despite economic problems that it has been enduring for several years since the Eurozone debt crisis.

This study has progressed some way towards enhancing our understanding of the EU's international identity/ role from the outward-looking perspective with the contribution to the EU's external perceptions (power and leadership) in Kazakhstan.

The perceptions of the interviewees (business and media elites, civil society and experts) and the mass media are similar in that the events of recent years have led to a negative perception of the EU, but almost had no effect on bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and the EU. In general, EU-Kazakhstan cooperation was perceived positively. Unsurprisingly, the most popular image (associations) of the EU has become a crisis in all sectors (economy, internal, and external policies) except those which are directly related to Kazakhstan. The difference is that the mass media broadcasts a normative dialogue between the EU and Kazakhstan that is more visible than in the responses of the interviewees. This is, because, in their opinion, the EU imposes less normative initiatives on Kazakhstan and Kazakhstani political elite, but rather only applies recommendations they find appropriate for the regime. Among other things, this study confirmed that there is a correlation the EU's representation of itself in the global arena and how it is perceived in Kazakhstan. That is, failure to comply with the EU norms and standards by the EU itself (the EU internal and external politics, EU migration policy) leads to the fact that the value of the norms themselves and desire to follow them are being questioned.

Regarding the theoretical contribution, the promotion of the EU's norms and values was associated with 'soft power' among the interviewees which supports previous findings. This research has brought a conceptual innovation: subsequently, norm-setting (normative influence) can be determined through the criteria of approval or support and criticism which contributes to the culture filter norms diffusion. According to my conceptual division, norms which are criticized will the most likely face rejection or resistance, whilst norms which are approved/ supported will be accepted in the form of adoption or adaptation.

Returning to the research questions posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that the EU is perceived as a standard and norm-setter, even a distant one, in certain areas presented by certain norms and to a certain degree in Kazakhstan. We cannot clearly say that the EU is perceived as an ultimate normative power, notwithstanding, one cannot claim the opposite either. An implication of this is the possibility that the EU's normative power will be more appropriate and valuable in Kazakhstan when transit of political power happens. However, norms which are ignored or resistant now have a chance to become transferrable in the future. Further studies will require more extensive data in order to be able to make more definite conclusions regarding the questions of norm-setting in Kazakhstan.

The generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations. Firstly, the current research was not specifically designed to evaluate factors related to the EU leadership in Kazakhstan, but rather, these findings emerged from the interview data. Secondly, unfortunately, no representatives of political elite have been interviewed due to a lack of opportunities to reach this highly significant cohort. Thirdly, only two mass media sources published in Russian representing mostly pro-governmental views have been analyzed, because there are almost no independent sources and very little information available about the EU in so-called "opposition" newspapers in Kazakhstan. Finally, there is still a need for conceptual clarity for the notion of external perceptions.

This research has presented many questions in need of further investigation. More research is required in order to better understand whether the EU is perceived as a normative power with the focus on the 'power' element. Future studies could elaborate on the reasons why there is criticism (rejection or resistance) of some EU's norms and values in Kazakhstan. Data gathered during this research could be interpreted by relying on theoretical insights with a greater emphasis on the way how norms are diffused.

In order to increase awareness about Kazakhstani perceptions on the EU, studies in the field should be more consistent and systematic. Further research in this field would be of great help if to conduct a more extensive media analysis involving sources in English and Kazakh with a different orientation, such as business and popular newspapers. It would be interesting to evaluate perceptions through the overview of TV programs, as well as attracting social media where publications of government officials could be available. It is also possible to conduct a large-scale sociological survey among the population of Kazakhstan. Conducting interviews with political elites would also help to more accurately confirm or refute the results of this study. Results of this thesis could be applicable in comparison with similar research design studies of the EU external perceptions in other CA countries.

In conclusion, the results of this study have made a significant contribution to the studies of the EU international identity and EU external perceptions. This work can be useful for the EU foreign policy and public policy, particularly, foreign policy learning. I want to conclude by citing Chaban and Holland (2014): ‘perceptions matter’.

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Author-conducted Interviews

The primary sources in this thesis were a collection of sixteen interviews among the representatives of the Kazakhstani elite. The interviewees chose to maintain their anonymity. The list of the interviewees named 1-16 with a short description is provided in Appendix 1.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. List of Interviewees.

Interviewee №	Cohort/ Professional position	Interview date
1	Intellectual elite/ researcher in public university (Academia)	1.10.2017
2	Intellectual elite/ independent researcher	26.10.2017
3	Media elite/ editor-in-chief	27.10.2017
4	Civil society & expert/ intellectual elite	30.10.2017
5	Expert in governmental organization	1.11.2017
6	Intellectual elite/ Think tank expert & researcher in public institution	1.11.2017
7	Civil society representative	16.11.2017
8	Media elite/ editor-in-chief	18.11.2017
9	Media elite/ editor	23.11.2017
10	Civil society representative & expert/ intellectual elite	1.12.2017
11	Intellectual elite/ researcher in public Think Tank	2.12.2017
12	Business elite	4.12.2017
13	Media elite/ editor	5.12.2017
14	Business elite	6.12.2017
15	Intellectual elite/ public Think Tank expert	16.12.2017
16	Intellectual elite/ private Think Tank expert	28.12.2017

Appendix 2. Questionnaire.

General questions

1. How would you characterize/ describe the European Union in your own words? What is your attitude to the EU – positive, neutral or negative?
2. Name 3 images / words/ phrases with which you associate the EU (before 2012 and after).
3. What kind of professional connections do you have with the EU/ EU countries?
(*specific for media and business representatives*)
4. What do you think is the strength/ weakness of the European Union? It can be both in its internal and international context.
5. Would you say that the EU is a great power?
 - If yes, please explain why. In what areas? What type of power?
 - If no, please explain why.
6. Would you describe the European Union as a leader in international politics?
 - If yes, please explain why. In what areas?
 - If no, please specify why.
7. Would you equate ‘the EU’ with Europe or vice versa? Why?
8. Do you think that the EU is more powerful/strong or weaker than it was 10 years ago or in the period/ 5 years ago in the world politics or internally? Will it be changed in the nearest future? How?
9. Can you define the exact leader in the EU? What are the criteria? If no, why?
10. In your words, what it is the main contribution of the EU to the worldwide community?
11. Please name positive/ negative features/ images of the EU.
12. Could you please reflect on the EU norms and values? What norms could you specify?

Country-specific questions

13. Can you say a couple of words about the dynamic of EU-Kazakhstan relations? Was there any change? Did you notice any change in relations during the last 5 years?
14. How would you characterize the current stage of the relationship between Kazakhstan and the EU? In your opinion, which issues in EU – Kazakhstan relations have the most impact on Kazakhstan?
15. In your opinion, does the EU serve as an example for Kazakhstan in any area?

16. Is there something to be improved in the relations between the EU and Kazakhstan?
17. Which Kazakhstani mass media sources do you prefer to learn more about the EU?
Which source do you trust the most?
18. Please rate the importance of the EU to Kazakhstan from 1 to 5 (1 low degree of importance, 5 - high) now and in the future. Please explain your choice.

The EU and Others

19. How would you assess the importance of the EU to Kazakhstan in relation to other global actors/ actors presented in the region (e.g. China, Russia, USA)? Why?
20. What do you think about the Euro in comparison with the US dollar?
21. Express your opinion on the following statement: Some people argue that there is no difference between the EU and the US in international politics. Do you agree with that?
Explain your answer.

Media elites only

22. What is the approximate percentage of the EU dedicated news from the overall coverage?
23. How do you find the news about the EU/ Europe? Do you cooperate with the EU press services/ Ministry for Foreign Affairs/ EU office in Kazakhstan?